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Modern Musical Drift

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Modern Musical Drift

By

W. J. Henderson

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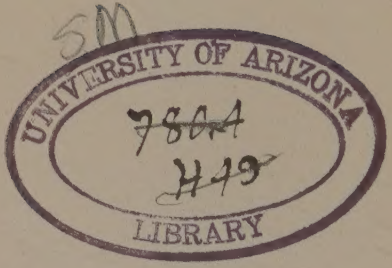

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TO MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE,

JAMES HUNEKER.

Dear James:

Beside the ebon Styx
The brood harmonious wanders slow.
A backward gaze on earth they fix,
And ask, "Where doth dear Music go?"

I fancy Palestrina stares,
And good Scarlatti gasps for breath,
While Handel, with his figured airs,
Bemoans poor Music's early death.

Old Haydn shakes his long peruke,
And Mozart wags his pendant cue,
As both record their soft rebuke:
"What is it that these moderns do?"

Alone in all that troubled throng
One moves with calm, unruffled brow;
For still Sebastian's voice is strong
To say, "'Twas I who taught them how."

So when the storms discordant brew,
You smile at me across the house;
For well you know there's nothing new,
Not even (pardon!) in your Strauss.

Except, perhaps, a fine disguise
Of leading motives, wood and strings,
Which make a score look wondrous wise,
And seem to mean so many things.

So weave your fancies; I'll weave mine;
And let them wander, dark or bright.
The Lords of Art have graven fine;
Perchance we both discern aright.

W. J. H.

August, 1904.

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Modern Musical Drift

PARSIFALIA

I. — A PURE FOOL IN THE NEW WORLD

> The Holy Grail! — I trust
> We are green in heaven's eyes.
>
> TENNYSON, *The Holy Grail.*

IT was the night before Christmas. The city of Gotham was surfeited with the vast spectacle of wealth in its annual orgy of expenditure. Women had careered madly through the savings of a twelvemonth; and desperate husbands, driven almost to the abyss of insanity, had plunged blindly into the vortex of buying, and mortgaged the labor of the next half-year. It was the merry Yule-tide, when every self-respecting New Yorker feels that it is incumbent upon him to assume a bank account, if he have it not, and to buy for his neighbor Christmas gifts more expensive than the neighbor can buy for him.

On the eve of Christmas Day it seemed as if half the city had turned to its last madness, for

Wagner's "Parsifal," torn from the holy seclusion of Baireuth by the ruthless hand of an American showman (from Vienna), was produced at the Metropolitan Opera-House for the first time in the New World. The fiat had gone forth that all prices of admission were to be doubled at the box office; and it was no secret that sidewalk venders of tickets were charging five times the figures nominated in the bond. It had been made known that the performance would begin at five of the clock in the afternoon, and that after the first act there would be an intermission of nearly two hours for rest and refreshment.

Restaurateurs in the neighborhood of the opera-house had sung their "Laus Deo" and marked up their schedule of charges. Society had been vainly interrogated by reporters as to how it intended to dress for a solemn festival, split between afternoon and evening. Trumpeters had been secured to blow selected motives to warn the faithful to their seats, and it had been published in very large type that against the singers engaged in the production had been launched the curse of Wahnfried. Nothing had been neglected that might add fresh fire to the flaming fever of extravagance.

At the appointed hour the ceremonial of the intoning of the motives was performed, and a little later the curtains swung wide to disclose the sylvan retreat near the Castle of Monsalvat. The deed was accomplished. The black Alberich of the Yankee ooze had wrested from its Baireuth bed the Rheingold of the Wagner family, and the gods of the Wahnfried hearthstone shivered in their Dämmerung.

A vast and strange assemblage sat in bewildered silence at the performance, and, having heard the martial pæans of much free advertising, went away thrilled with the belief that it had assisted at the introduction to America of the "masterpiece" of Wagner. O ye Norse gods and little fish-maidens! There was a Wagner once — but no matter.

What kind of impression did this drama make upon the unprejudiced and equipoised mind? What is the real truth about this huge ragoût of mysticism and orchestration which in the looming shadows of the Festspielhaus is called "sacred"? The story of "Parsifal" has been told over and over again. The themes are becomingly catalogued in the handbooks of Wolzogen, Heinz, and Kufferath. The very boarding-school girls smirk at one another as they hum "Der Reine Thor," and rosy-cheeked boys can whistle

the Klingsor theme. There is no need to rehearse here either the story or the music. But let us come at once to some conclusions drawn from a cool, dispassionate study of a dozen performances of "Parsifal" beyond the factitious influences created by the Baireuth exaltation.

"Parsifal" is the child of Wagner's artistic decrepitude. It is a decrescendo in inspiration, a ritardando in invention. More than any other drama of Wagner does it rely upon the dazzling of the eye to dull the keenness of the musical ear. It is a most imposing pageant set to unimposing music. Wagner fired heaven once with the immolation of Brünnhilde. It was not to be done again. The light on the Holy Grail is white and cold.

The entire machinery of the familiar Wagnerian drama is here; but the scene painter, the stage manager, the mechanician, and the electrician bravely hold up the hands of the musician. Cast any aged rags of scenery on the stage; let the lights be as dim and flickering as the dying fancies of Adrian; let the actors be of the breed of the subsidized provincial German theatre, and yet the last act of "Tristan und Isolde" will peal its eloquence into the heart and blast the soul with the lightnings of genius. Give the first act of "Die Walküre," most hackneyed of all great

acts, the tottering timbers of battered scenes, a moonlight of such Prussian blue as never was on sea or land, and still the might and power of its pulsating passion will conquer.

But strip "Parsifal" of its scenic and mechanic glories, and you will lay bare the skeleton of a system with only a few shreds of the flesh left upon it. The poem of "Parsifal" is almost utterly devoid of those great basic elements which make human life dramatic for men and women. Nowhere in it do we see, as in Wagner's other works, the primeval man and woman at gaze upon each other in the naked barbaric splendor of desire. Instead of the one passion which makes plays, we are asked to consider the suffering of a man who is as remote from our common sympathies as his figure is from our eyes when it lies recumbent in the seat behind the altar of the Grail.

Amfortas is held up as typical of the sufferings of humanity under the curse of carnal sin. Tannhäuser is more eloquent than a thousand of him. We see Tannhäuser in the grip of the temptress; of the sin of Amfortas we hear talk, talk, talk; while the sufferer himself is carried about upon a litter, — a charnel-house sight,— making his unending moan to the patient stars.

The hero of the story, young Parsifal, comes before us looking like young Siegfried and wearing a musical tag of similar style. In the last act he is bearded and armored, again like Siegfried, and his theme is exfoliated in an umbrageous harmony of trumpets and trombones. But what a tenuous echo he is, after all! Siegfried blazes with all the glory of manhood: he has hot blood in his veins; and he carves his way through fire and the wrath of a god to the mountain of his heart's desire.

Parsifal loves no woman. He cannot, for he is the embodiment of ascetic, or at least monastic, denial. The one emotion which he submits for our hearts is pity, a most excellent emotion and admitted to be akin to love. A highly respected sister-in-law of love it may be; but love is love, and spins the big round world down the grooves of time.

As an ethical basis of this drama, we are asked to accept a philosophy of pity, founded on the ethics of Arthur Schopenhauer and amplified by the adoption of certain of the teachings of Buddha. Instead of those beautiful doctrines of redemption through the love and self-sacrifice of woman, so eloquently preached in some of Wagner's other dramas, we are besought to look

upon woman as a temptress, and renunciation of love as the highway to heaven.

As the exemplar of the claim of pity, we are presented with the picture of the wounded Amfortas, who is a lay figure of incomprehensible personality. He is shown in the first act, and the pity doctrine is further preached in the pother made over the killing of the swan (such a big, fat, able-bodied swan!). As the master of evil we behold Klingsor, who comes before us in the first scene of the second act with more paraphernalia of slate-green walls, blue smoke, and exclamatory incantations than Faust ever had in his salad days at the Paris Grand Opera.

Kundry, the only woman in the play, is an ill-made muddle of inhumanity, who never commands a single instant of sympathy. She strives by service to atone for her sins, which are committed under the spell of Klingsor. She has neither love nor passion. Gurnemanz, the aged knight, is a wearisome talker. He tells the story of his life or any one else's life to whomsoever will listen. The audience cannot escape.

With the exception of Klingsor and his "flower-girls" — a charming euphemism — these puppets are shown to us in the first scene, in which the necessary explanations are made in long-winded speeches, mostly by Gurnemanz, seated

on a rock and reciting like weary Wotan in Act II. of "Die Walküre." When this doddering graphophone comes to lead Parsifal to the castle of the Grail, Wagner sorts over his old plans and specifications and selects Siegfried's Rhine Journey.

But this time it is a sedate and pious progress finishing with bells and chorals. Nevertheless, it is one of the fine spots in the work. When the bells are in tune, it is imposing. The scenery changes in an ingenious and effective panorama.

Then comes the crown of the act and the noblest scene in the work, — the unveiling of the Grail and the ceremony of the Last Supper. This is not the time for a discussion of the propriety of putting such matters on the stage. Suffice it to say, that here Wagner has accomplished one of the most triumphant demonstrations of the effectiveness of his organic union of the arts tributary to the drama. Music, text, action, scenic form and color, all work together in an irresistibly potent symphony of symbolism, which no reverent man can hear and see without emotion. It makes "Parsifal" almost persuasive.

The second act opens with the exhibition of Klingsor, as already noted. He is as unreal as the purple light which illumines Kundry when

he summons her from the trapdoor in the stage. She rises like Mother Erda in "Siegfried," Act III., but, oh, so different! Away with such cheap and paltry claptrap as this scene! Poor Wagner, he had to write it to explain himself; and in "Parsifal" he needed a lot of explanation. Not all the Ellises nor Wolzogens in the world could blot out the Drury Lane stain of this one scene. Even the exclamatory "Ha, ha!" of the time-dishonored stage villain is not spared us.

The second scene of the act is the magic garden of flower-maidens, Venusberg, No. 2. No. 1 is much better, both dramatically and musically. This one is "Tannhäuser" and water, and very poor water at that. Yet it is the scene which will please the populace most, when the flower-girls are pretty and graceful, for their music is languorous and suggestive of Leo Delibes raised to the seventh power.

But there is nothing human in this whole scene. Kundry, unlike Venus, does not love the man she tempts. Venus is at the heart a passionate, despairing woman. Kundry is the deputed and bewitched instrument of a Wahnfried Cagliostro. Her deed is that of a woman of the pavement; her extenuation the pitiful and transparent fact that she plies her trade in a trance and under an irresistible spell. We see her put in the

trance; we see her come out of it. Before and after it she is a rough and revolting yokel with tangled black locks and a gunny bag for her garb. In the trance she is transformed by the power of the magician to a beautiful blonde in a diaphanous décolleté gown.

The symbolism of the whole scene is weak and tottering. The logic of the enlightenment of Parsifal by the long-drawn kiss with wind and string accompaniment (see "Siegfried," Act III.) is beyond finite conception. The symbolism of the waking of a sleeping Valkyr maiden by the first kiss of love is something that even the most hardened society woman might understand; but the employment of a courtesan's salute to enlighten a pure fool by pity is a device which swings futile between heaven and earth.

The last act is a flat desert of tedium, with oases of musical verdure. Gurnemanz has more opportunities to lecture on Amfortas, Good Friday, and similar topics, but even with the aid of Wagner's own musical illustrations he is uninteresting. The foot-washing episode is a pitiable and shocking plagiarism from the life of Christ. The central figure, with its beard, its long hair, and its light-tinted robe, is so like the Good Shepherd of the paintings that it suggests an automaton replica. And this is all so ines-

sential. It is dragged in to give the thing a sacred atmosphere.

The really beautiful places in the first scene of the last act are the splendid proclamation of the Grail theme after the baptism of Parsifal — one of the few bursts of power which recall the Wagner of "Die Walküre" — and the ineffably lovely peacefulness of the Good Friday music. This indeed is an inspired page in the score; but it was written twenty-five years before the drama was produced.

The final scene is a weak and diluted repetition of the second scene of the first act. This time Parsifal unveils the Grail. The music is necessarily built of the same materials. It does not achieve its effect. Neither is the pictorial impression as deep. We have seen it all before. The gorgeous, pealing brass passage at the second entrance to the Grail hall is the most muscular thing in the whole act, but it stands by itself. It seems to have no logical place in the musical scheme.

The score of this drama is mostly a long, faint echo of Wagner's greatest works. Siegfried vainly strives to animate this Parsifalian puppet of renunciation with the blood of the Volsung woe. Cloudlike shreds of "Tristan und Isolde" struggle to float sunset tints across this pallid sky.

All is copying, futile, without inspiration, without newness, — a hotch-potch of the old marketable materials made over with much constructive skill, but with commercial thrift and inartistic insincerity. There is hardly a note of honest æsthetic conviction in the whole thing. One is inclined to think that Wagner did not believe in it himself.

These, then, are the conclusions gathered from performances in a common opera-house of Wagner's religious, symbolical, ethical, philosophical, and highly gilded summary of his artistic creed. When this work is played in Baireuth, where churchly airs are assumed and the people robe their spirits in sackcloth and ashes, the impression is different. But now that "Parsifal" has come out into the light of morning and faced the cold glare of the work-day world, it must be measured by the artistic standards which are applied to Wagner's other dramas. Weighed in the balance with "Tristan und Isolde" or any of the "Ring" works, except perhaps "Rheingold," to which it is artistically not a stranger, it must be found wanting. Beside "Tannhäuser," which treats the same subject, it is a mass of glittering artificialities. Wagner was wise in wishing that this drama should be preserved for home consumption.

II. — ETHICS AND ÆSTHETICS

The cut nails of machine divinity may be driven in, but they won't clinch.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES,
The Professor at the Breakfast Table, Ch. IV.

THERE was no question that Gotham — wicked, wayward Gotham — was much stirred up by this production. It was generally accepted as a kind of religious ceremony, as to which no right-minded gentleman should deliver himself of critical comment. Yet there were some picturesque exceptions to the general state. A few ministers of the Gospel sprang to the pulpit or the interviewer, and descanted in glowing terms on the outrageous irreligion of the thing, or rather on the sacrilege of the representation by "painted actors" of incidents in the life of Christ. Of course these gentlemen had not taken the trouble to study the work in the original, and some of them showed conclusively that they were utterly ignorant of it.

But this chanced to be one of those cases in which the pulpit is not immune. The ignorance

of the reverend utterers of sweeping statements was blithely exposed by some of the men whose business it has been for many years to study the works of Wagner. Let us, then, in all justice and humility, with due observance of the Grail adorers on the one side and the objecting pulpit orators on the other, ask ourselves how much of real Christianity is disclosed in "Parsifal." How much more of German mystic philosophy, of mediævalism, of the teachings of Siddartha, and lastly of pure paganism? What is this work, after all, but a summary of the blind gropings of the imaginative Wagner after a philosophy beyond his reach?

Why all this pother about the sacrilege of putting the Holy Grail on the stage? Was there ever a Holy Grail? Is the green glass chalice which now reposes peacefully in Genoa a holy vessel? Did the blood of Christ ever sanctify it? Did Joseph of Arimathea catch the precious drops in it; and was it really the vessel used at the Last Supper of Jesus and his apostles?

The ceremony of the Last Supper is unquestionably represented in a crude manner in Wagner's drama, where it is mixed with a pictorial representation of the legendary tale that the Grail fed and sustained its knights. To this de-

vout Christians may make objection with good ground. The place which the communion occupies in the ceremonies of the Church is such that to see it made part of a public theatrical performance, no matter how solemn, or how artistic, or how honest in its purpose to treat holy things reverentially, must be repugnant to every Christian mind.

As to this, nothing more need be said. Of the effect of the representation on an audience there can be no doubt. It is impressive in the highest degree. The emotions caused by the unveiling scene are a tribute to the power of theatrical art. But let it be thoroughly understood that the stage picture and the music are the most influential elements. Taking that scene as a point of suggestion, let us ask ourselves how much of real Christianity there is in "Parsifal." Let us examine the ethics of the drama and probe its philosophy.

The doctrine of enlightenment by pity, preached so insistently in this drama, has no relation to Christianity. The religion of Jesus Christ knows of but one enlightenment, that by faith. It is "he that believeth," not he that pitieth. The enlightenment of faith enables the Christian to conceive God. But what do we find in "Parsifal"? A man has committed

a mortal sin, in that he has fallen from that state of personal chastity in which the servants of the Holy Grail are required to live. The outward and visible sign of his fall is an immediate physical (with accompanying spiritual) punishment, inflicted by the impious hand of the Tempter himself.

Here Wagner follows the story as told by Chrétien des Troyes, and not the version of Wolfram von Eschenbach. Chrétien made the spear that with which Longinus pierced the side of the Saviour. Wolfram made it simply a poisoned lance. Wagner accepted the sacred spear, because he was always an eager searcher after ethical significance, even when there was less virtue in it than there is in this one. The wound of the sacred lance is more than physical; it is a mortal hurt of the soul. Wagner tells us that for such a wound there can be but one cure, a touch of the selfsame lance in the hands of one who has successfully withstood the temptation to which the sufferer fell a victim.

Very well. There is absolutely no authority for such a conclusion. It is a bit of mediæval religious mysticism, an adaptation of the fabulous miracles. Wagner, however, has a right to manufacture miracles for a fabulous story.

He has as much right to do it in the tale of the Holy Grail as he had in the matter of Hagen's wonder-working beverages in "Götterdämmerung."

But when he tells us that the reason for Parsifal's action is enlightenment by pity, he goes still farther away from the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity and moves through the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer toward the religion of the Buddha. It is a grave error to relegate to a secondary place the influence of Schopenhauer on Wagner and to credit the poet-composer with a direct entry into the teachings of the Gautama. We must bear in mind continually that Wagner got from Schopenhauer two great doctrines, one artistic, and the other ethical.

Schopenhauer propounded as the basis of his æsthetic system the theorem that it is the business of art to represent to us the eternal essence of things by means of prototypes. The conditions of time and place, cause and tendency, must be cleared away, and the naked Eternal Idea underneath disclosed. The discernment and revelation of this Idea are the duty and privilege of art.

Wagner, then, sought to set forth his personages and their actions as symbolical. They

were to be visual embodiments of Eternal Ideas. Amfortas is the sinner in the agony of his punishment. Parsifal is the savior, the pure one who can redeem; Klingsor is the evil one, and Kundry the unwilling slave of his power. If here we find ourselves involved in some contradictions, let us be patient. Wagner's logic is that of a poet and a musician. It will not stand the test of the metaphysician.

But to resume. The ethical doctrine which the composer obtained from Schopenhauer was more significant in its results. Schopenhauer's philosophic system need not be set forth here. Suffice it to say that ethically its only possible outcome was negative. The world is so bad that the chief end of man should be to get out of it.

To reach the state of mind in which that end is the chief object, one must rid himself of all desire and yearn to arrive at a complete negation of the will to live. Recall "Tristan und Isolde." The first step toward the negation of the will to live is perfect sympathy with suffering. Then comes asceticism, which leads directly away from life toward a condition of abstraction.

Here the thought touches the monasticism of the early Church and avows a kinship with

the Buddhistic doctrine. Withdrawal from the world and safety by absorption into the universal unconsciousness were the Buddhist's hope of peace. But neither Gautama nor Schopenhauer had any definite, positive reason for this. Here the early monk, who was looking out for the salvation of his own precious soul and letting other people's souls take care of themselves, came nearer to the ideals of Wagner as set forth in "Parsifal."

No, Schopenhauer did not teach Wagner the doctrine of "enlightenment by pity," for with Schopenhauer pity was not enlightenment, but the beginning of a personal abstraction. A man was sorry for others because they were in the world, the very worst place a man could inhabit. His sensuous nature made him like the things he found here (such as flower-maidens, for example); and his duty was to mortify the flesh, get rid of all his mortal appetites, live in asceticism, and die as soon as possible. Wagner was fond of grafting his own ideas on the philosophical systems of bigger men than himself. So he invented this doctrine of enlightenment. How he worked out his psychologic plan we shall see presently.

No doubt Wagner had his eye on Buddhism when he wrote "Parsifal." It is history that he

once contemplated a Buddhistic drama, called "The Victors," in which he was to preach the doctrine of fleshly renunciation and salvation through the mortification of desire. But he abandoned the scheme. The story was Eastern, and he did some delving in Oriental literature.

How the "Four Sublime Verities" of Gautama, the founder of the Buddhistic religion, must have appealed to him! These were, first, that pain exists; second, that the cause of pain is desire or attachment; third, that pain can be ended by Nirvana; and fourth, how to attain Nirvana.

The way to Nirvana is hard, much harder than the path to the Christian Heaven, for the man must walk it without aid. There is no vicarious sacrifice in the religion of Siddartha. You must walk the wine-press alone, and drink of the dregs of life. All the best of the Ten Commandments are found in the precepts of this religion. Added to them are minor commands looking to complete abstraction.

For example, a Bhikshu (an order of monk) is forbidden to look at or converse with a woman lest emotion should disturb the serene indifference of his soul. He must not even save his mother if she is drowning, except with a long stick reached toward her.

"To sit in solemn silence in a dull, dark dock," seems to have been the chief business of the founder. Thus is he always represented cross-legged and contemplative, with eyes downcast, "cleaving with the thunderbolt of science the mountain of ignorance," and perceiving the illusory nature of all things. So he comes at last to that state in which he breaks the bonds binding him to existence and enters into the complete Nirvana.

In this religion pity is pre-eminent, for it is sympathy with suffering. But it does not confine itself to human beings. Animals are also to share our sympathies, and here we meet with the foundation of Wagner's idea in "Parsifal" of the sacredness of the life of dumb creatures in the realms of the Holy Grail. But now let us see how Wagner works out his jumble of religious and philosophic doctrines.

Parsifal is a pure fool. Weigh that, first of all. He knows nothing; yet when he enters the flower-garden he compliments the women on their beauty, and fails to understand what they want of him. O wise young judge! this pure fool, who does not know what is the matter with Amfortas, and therefore has no desire to aid him, must be enlightened by pity. So Wagner sets Kundry to work to tell him the

story of his mother's sufferings, and she ends the narration by printing a long kiss upon his lips. Wagner was fond of long kisses set to music, and he used one in "Siegfried" as an awakener.

Now what happens? This salacious kiss of an unchaste woman, imprinted on the lips of a youth who was, according to Wagner's delineation of him, as innocent as a child of eight or ten, instantly opens up to him the entire experience of Amfortas, and fills him with pity and horror! That is, indeed, a miracle. And to make the thing psychologically more absurd, Wagner shows us this "pure fool" battling madly with the simultaneous working of these two emotions. What has become of the enlightenment by pity? Plainly the enlightenment comes first and the pity afterward! Furthermore, Parsifal prays to the Redeemer for forgiveness for his failure to understand the scene in the hall of the Grail. But, as H. E. Krehbiel pertinently asked in an article in the "New York Tribune," what could the boy have done when he had not yet got the sacred spear from Klingsor?

What a hold, then, the Buddhistic ideas, toward which Wagner was led by Schopenhauer, had taken upon him! The religion of

the crucial scene of the drama is not Christian at all. The outward and visible signs of the scene are purely pagan, but the underlying philosophy is Buddhistic. It is the final issue of the dreams which this master visionary had in his mind when he planned "The Victors." The only remnant of Christian story in this act is the reminiscence of the drama which Wagner once planned relating to the Saviour.

In his "Jesus of Nazareth" he intended to show Mary of Magdala in love with the Divine One. Wagner was no fool. Nor was he a madman, as Nordau has tried to show. But he was first, last, and all the time a theatrical thinker. His imagination dwelt in the show-house, and all was grist that came to his mill. If he had thought the meditations of the Creator good material for a music drama, he would have laid his artistic hands upon the eternal throne itself.

Thus, he shrank not from grafting spectacular show, Schopenhauerian ethics, and Buddhistic dogmas on the legend of the Holy Grail. As a matter of absolute fact, the Christian elements in this drama are almost wholly spectacular and in the nature of accessories. If ministers of the Gospel desire to be shocked by "Parsifal," — and they have reason to be, if

they look for it in the right place, — let them consider the place which the Holy Grail and the ceremony of the communion occupy in this play.

They are merely stage devices to heighten the picture of the suffering of Amfortas, and to impress upon our minds the vital need of the enlightenment of the pure fool. The processional of the Grail is spectacle pure and simple. The eating of the Last Supper is spectacle pure and simple. It has absolutely nothing to do with the story of the drama.

The unveiling of the Grail is necessary because it shows how Amfortas is made to suffer agony. But it is no assistance to such Christian ethics as there are in this muddle. If Amfortas has an incurable wound, which is merely the outward symbol of conscience, he ought not to need the sight of the Grail to make him feel worse. The thought of his unworthiness to be a member of the chaste brotherhood should be enough.

The foot-washing incident is theatricalism of the crassest kind. Can any one show that it has a direct connection with the development of the story? The argument in its favor is that it shows Kundry as a penitent, and establishes her in relations of atonement with Parsifal.

Quite unnecessary, for the significance of the second act is that Parsifal, having resisted her tempting, is spiritually her master and also her redeemer. The act of absolution is made possible by his triumph over the flesh. He could have baptized her and bidden her trust in the Lord without offering us a portrait of the Saviour as represented in the seventh chapter of St. Luke: —

"And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

"And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment."

Wagner brings on the tears after the foot-washing, so that he can show us how Kundry was released from the curse of laughter. Or was the curse imposed solely that this theatrical picture might be introduced?

The sacred spear has some connection with the story, but the weapon is not an important feature of Christianity. There is even room for doubt as to whether there ever was a sacred spear at all. The wound certainly existed; but

who can vouch for the preservation of the spear as an object of reverence? So let us for the present dismiss the profound religious basis of Richard Wagner's "Parsifal." Buddha and Arthur Schopenhauer taught the dramatist more essentials than the Holy Bible did. The foundations of the drama rest on the philosophy of negation. The Christianity is merely ornamental, spectacular, and delusive.

III. — THE NATIONAL RELIGIOUS DRAMA

I shall lay down a type of theological orthodoxy to which all the divine legends in our city must conform.

PLATO, *Republic* (*Grote's abstract*).

"PARSIFAL" is the supreme test of the outcome of Wagner's theory that the modern theatre ought to bear the same relation to the life of the people as the theatre of the Greeks did. All students of the master's writings know that he preached this especially in those years when his system had attained definite and detailed form in his mind. In the Greek theatre he saw an art influence far-reaching and mighty, — an influence which dominated because it dramatized the artistic and religious ideals of a people. That he failed to discern the identity of religion and art in the symbolical embodiments named gods by the imaginative Greeks is another story.

Furthermore, he objected strenuously and rightly to any criticism of his philosophic and artistic system based on the study of his early works, which were written before his system was fully developed. In the "Communication to My Friends" he says:—

"Certain critics who pretend to judge my art doings as a connected whole have set about their task with this same uncritical heedlessness and lack of feeling. Views on the nature of art that I have proclaimed from a standpoint which it took me years of evolution step by step to gain, they seize on for the standard of their verdict, and point them back upon those very compositions from which I started on the natural path of evolution that led me to this standpoint.

"When for instance — not from the standpoint of abstract æsthetics, but from that of practical artistic experience — I denote the *Christian principle as hostile to or incapable of art*, these critics point me out the contradiction in which I stand toward my earlier dramatic works, which undoubtedly are filled with a certain tincture of this principle so inextricably blended with our modern evolution."

Excellent. The italics are not Wagner's. Let us, then, avoid falling into the error of chaining Wagner to the beautiful Christianity idealized by dramatic art, which he, unwise youth that he was, poured into his "Tannhäuser," and confine ourselves to the full-fledged "Parsifal," in which we are not, as he tells us, to regard the Christianity as a vital art principle, but as one opposed to true art. What does the man mean?

One thing is clear. Wagner did endeavor to theatricalize religions and to parody in his feeble modern manner the theatre of the Greeks. But

if he failed (and who can doubt that he did after studying the bloodless philosophy of the last product of his genius?), it was because he was trying to do with calculating forethought what the Greek did spontaneously, and because his religion supplied him plentifully and unconsciously with the Schopenhauerian materials of art; namely, Eternal Ideas represented by means of prototypes.

How came Wagner to fail in his puerile attempt to make a drama out of a supposed incident in the life of Christ? Misled by the similarity of his conception of the Saviour of mankind as a pure human being resisting the seductions of a temptress in the person of Mary Magdalen to his Tannhäuser battling with carnal passion typified by Venus, or his Parsifal, remaining innocent through sheer guilelessness, he set out to thrust into the glare of the footlights the personality of Jesus. And then he found that the personality was not merely human, nor the poetic embodiment of an idea, even an Eternal Idea, but an everlasting miracle and mystery, a divinity beyond the reach of his trapdoors, purple lights, and tenor tubas.

The story of Christ is tremendously dramatic, but it has eluded every attempt at theatrical treatment. The thing done at Oberammergau

is not drama, but an old-fashioned mystery play. It is a moving panorama. Pinero, Belasco, or even Ibsen would shrink from an attempt to dramatize for the ordinary theatre the story of the Saviour. But Wagner, blinded by his own ambition to make a show of all things, to seize upon every suggestion of religion as material for music, thought for a time that he could turn the Son of Man into a mime.

What a different art work was that of the Greek dramatist! How much more direct and thornless was the path by which he reached the theatrical representation of his gods and goddesses and the dramatic relation of the fables in which they were the actors! With his stylus in hand he sat at gaze upon a world of personated ideas, of symbols in action. All was poetic and imaginative. All was the creation of the human mind speculating upon the operation of unseen forces and subtle passions. There was no almighty revelation to baffle him. The infinite did not come and stand before him in an incomprehensible mortalization of itself. What he had of the world beyond the skies was the dreaming of his own kind.

What were Zeus and Hermes, Aphrodite and Hera, Artemis and Apollo, Pallas and Poseidon, but personifications of ideas, those eternal types

which even the nugatory speculation of Schopenhauer postulated as the materials of true art? When the Greek tragic dramatist was not utilizing the gods, he employed the people of the mythologic tales. When Phrynicus, in 511 B. C., wrote a tragedy on the capture of Miletus, melting an audience to tears with the pathos of a well-known contemporary event, he was fined a thousand drachmæ for his ill-chosen subject.

When Wagner delved in the pagan mythology of the Northmen, he fell upon metal like that of the Greeks. Nearly every personage in the burg of Wallhal has a companion on Olympus. In the Eddas Wagner found eternal types created by the human imagination by the same processes as those of the Greeks. Hence the splendid humanity of his Wotan, his Brünnhilde, his Fricka.

What had the Greek? The entire Grecian religion grew out of the worship of the powers of nature. It recognized one power as the head of all, Zeus, the god of heaven and light. "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light." The Greek's notion of the beginning of all things was the same as the Hebrew's. With Zeus abode in the clear expanse of ether Hera, representing the eternal feminine element in the divinity.

The other gods were partly representatives of the attributes of Zeus himself, — as Athene, knowledge, sprung from his head; Apollo, beauty and purity; Hermes, who brings up the treasures of fruitfulness from the depths of the earth; and Cora, the child, now lost and now recovered by Hera, typifying the winter and the summer. Poseidon and Hephæstus represented the elements, water and fire. But why go farther with this catalogue? It is known to every school-boy.

Together with these symbols the Greek dramatist had Hercules and Prometheus, Paris and Orestes, Jason and Medea, and other earth-born mythologic personages, the Siegfrieds and Gunthers and Sieglindes of their mythologic world, demigods and heroes all, acting in fables of wondrous poetic power, built on imaginative developments of ideals. The Greek world knew these tales. The dramatist of the Æschylean age was situated as Weber was when he put "Der Freischütz" before Germany. He utilized the fairy tales of the people, and offering them in a novel form made them eloquent with a new glory.

Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were the masters of the Greek tragedy; and their plays all deal with either mythologic or legendary

stories and personages. The ideas preached in the ethics of their dramas were those of Greek morality. The gods and goddesses introduced or referred to were the embodiments of Greek ideals. Though the populace was not so able a doctrinaire as to know that there was in truth but one deity, Zeus, of whom all the others were but aids and expressions, it had the enormous advantage of intimate acquaintance with the poetic attributes of the galaxy of gods. It was a public ripe for its religious drama.

Now, when Richard Wagner set out to build up a modern theatre which should have the same relation to the life of the people as the theatre of the Greeks had to theirs, he started on the right path. He took the legendary materials to be found in German literature. He wrote with unerring judgment when he created his operatic version of "The Flying Dutchman." The pity of it is that he did not compose this work when he was at the period of the maturity of his genius. We should have had something almost as splendid as "Tristan und Isolde," for while the story is not so suggestive as the old legend treated by Gottfried von Strassbourg, it is not far behind it. At any rate, it is purely Teutonic in its character, though in its origin it is Greek. For, of course,

Vanderdecken is but a modern replica of Ulysses. The Germans knew the story, for Heine had made it theirs. Wagner wrote wisely and well in this drama.

In "Tannhäuser" again he found his materials in the vast treasure-house of German literature and legend. Possibly this story was known to fewer Germans than "The Flying Dutchman," but its character was sympathetic to them and there was no mistaking the force of its moral lesson. Yet the religious doctrines of this drama are not essentially those of the Christian Church; they are those of religion and morality in general. The idea of salvation through love of a pure woman is the Goethean doctrine of the eternal womanly leading us upward. It was not original with Wagner, but it was beloved by him.

In "Lohengrin" we come nearer to the mystical thoughts of such a work as "Parsifal," yet here humanity operates in the natural desire of Elsa to reach into the secrets of her husband's heart and life, and still more powerfully in the vengeful character of the sexless and inexorable Ortrud.

In both of these splendid dramas of Wagner's genius we are confronted at every step with the normal working of human passions,

and love throbs through both of them. In "Parsifal" we have no single pulse of love. In "Parsifal" salvation is brought by ignorance and miracle. In "Tannhäuser" it comes triumphantly through suffering, repentance, and prayer. In "Parsifal" the sufferings of Amfortas are relieved by the purity of another man. In "Tannhäuser" the misery of the hero is assuaged by his own repentance and the holy love of Elizabeth. The religion of "Tannhäuser" is human; that of "Parsifal" is ceremonial, panoramic, abstract.

"Parsifal" is a dramatization of ceremonials. In the first and third acts we behold the pageant of religious rites; in the second the diorama of bacchanalian orgies. Externals are thrust upon us constantly; the depths are hidden under a veil of scenic pretence and musical delusion. The bulk of the music of the work is external and descriptive. Little, indeed, is there of the tonal embodiment of subjective ideas. Compare the three acts of "Parsifal" with the three great emotional episodes of "Tristan und Isolde." What a stupendous development the latter work shows of the tragedy of fatal passion!

In its first act the operation of a magical agency breaks down the hitherto safe bonds of restraint and plunges two typical human beings

into the very vortex of flaming love. In the second act they rush together and forget honor. The stroke of retribution falls; fate deals her deadly blow. In the third act remorse, agony, death, and the salvation of suffering souls by negation.

There is a drama which preaches no religious doctrine, which has no dogma save the Buddhistic one of release from suffering by death, yet which stands in closer relation to the life of the people than all of Wagner's religious dramas, because it deals with world-thoughts.

When Wagner worked with the purely mythical and legendary tales of the German people, he built dramas of national character and power. When he undertook to turn into theatrical pageants the teachings of Christianity, he failed utterly. The Greek succeeded because his religion was one of symbols, of deifications of the powers of nature, with its literature developed from tales of the fabulous doings of gods and goddesses, tales embodying in imaginative form fundamental facts of nature.

When Wagner sought his inspiration in the mythology of the North, which was developed in precisely the same manner as the Greek mythology, he found material of poetic and suggestive kind. But when, by dramatizing

Christian doctrine and history, he tried to bring his national theatre into such relation to the life of the people as the Greek dramatists brought theirs, he failed, for the simple reason that at this point his entire theory as to the suitability of mythical and legendary material to the use of the dramatist broke down.

There is nothing mythological in the teachings of the Christian religion, nor in the acts of its Founder or apostles. These things stand apart from mythology and are differentiated from it absolutely. They are not and could not have been the product of human imagination, symbolizing human experience and speculation. The profoundest philosophers of antiquity never hit upon the basic doctrines of Christianity.

Beautiful as the teachings of Socrates are, they are essentially human. The Sermon on the Mount sets up a system of ethics never dreamed of by Aristotle or Plato. Only Buddha ever approached Christ, and the outcome of the Hindu's entire system was not eternal salvation and glory, but endless silence and the negation of death. From this Wagner could not escape, even in his "Parsifal," for Kundry, in the final scene, dies of what? Of a Buddhistic ethical idea!

Wagner's greatest works are unquestionably

those in which the fundamental myths or legends were symbolical of human passions, of the world-wide experience of mankind. "Tannhäuser," "Die Walküre," "Siegfried," "Götterdämmerung," and "Tristan und Isolde" are Wagner's masterpieces of serious drama, not the saccharine "Lohengrin," nor the tinselled ritual, "Parsifal." Are not those, with the matchless comedy of manners, "Die Meistersinger," enough for one mind to have created? Why should we believe it incumbent upon us to uphold all that Wagner did?

We can say of him as Prentice said of Napoleon, "Grand, gloomy, and peculiar, he sat a sceptred hermit, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality." Taking him by and large, as the sailors say, he was the most striking figure in musical history. Why discredit him by trying to show that "Parsifal," the feeble child of his artistic senility, was filled with the vigor of his young Volsung or the radiant power of his immortal song of love insatiate?

DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN

I. — A FUTILE GOD AND A POTENT DEVIL

> The will
> And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
> Left him at large to his own dark designs.
> MILTON, *Paradise Lost*, Bk. I.

WITH every year the festival of the four dramas is celebrated in the metropolis of the New World. Parsifalian orgies are new, and the wine of the holy cup offers a novel intoxication to restless spirits ever seeking fresh excitements. But your good, honest, old Wagnerite goes yearly to gape in awestruck silence at the majesty of the "wildered" Wotan, and to bask in the sunshine of Siegfried's radiant youth. Whistle your Last Supper motive, you Monsalvationer, if you will, as you crunch your lobster salad after the celebration, but we old-time Wagnerites, who have hunted with the pack since first the "flight" theme pulsated across the world, we shall trot home murmuring the slumber motive and lay us down to pleasant dreams with a final sigh of Fafner's "Lass't mich schlafen."

Perhaps this is a good time to review our impressions of that wonderful creation of a strange genius, "Der Ring des Nibelungen." Whatever else may be said of Wagner, it must always be admitted that he was a genius. Something of the vanity of the child, the naïveté that always dwells in the organization of the truly original artist, is to be discerned in his every action, in his every utterance; and it would be strange if it did not force itself upon our notice in his works. There it discloses itself most frequ ntly in a ludicrous error of taking seriously things that can never be other than amusing to the casual observer, and of missing the point of some of his own best ideas.

Wagner has been much praised as a poet. Time was when the present writer (who must be his own confessor), feeling the power and beauty of the fundamental stuff in the music dramas, rather than the adapter's cumbersome and rudely articulated Germanizing of it, dreamed that Wagner had poetic craftsmanship of no mean order. But he never fell into the error of regarding him as a brother of the northern skalds, a bard chanting in full-blooded imagination. Wagner was a dramatist, of an uncommonly high order, if you will, looking always to the symbolism of musical investure for

his stage pictures, but just a dramatist and nothing more.

His truest drama, as it is his most finely wrought, is "Tristan und Isolde," which rests upon the simplest of emotional propositions, demonstrated in the most convincing of musical illustration. But "Der Ring des Nibelungen" is his most ponderous conception, his most elaborate structure, and withal second only to "Tristan und Isolde" in the majestic heights of musical delineation to which it triumphantly ascends.

Not a little of its musical glory grows out f its dramatic difficulties. In its beginning it deals with gods, dwarfs, nixies of the Rhine, and cumbersome giants, all fabulous, nebulous, in some instances almost intangible figures, whose only force lies in their simulation of humanity, and whose mastering weakness consists in their unreality. Gradually these gods and goddesses fade away and leave the picture occupied with purely human figures alone. The last majestic burst of supernal majesty is the final scene of "Die Walküre." In "Siegfried" a worn and weary wanderer, cherishing a feeble hope, powerless to turn the flow of events, passes across the canvas and dwindles out of sight before the dawn of human love.

The rest is pure humanity, except when in

the end of "Götterdämmerung" the imperial godhood of Brünnhilde enthrones itself upon the wreck of worlds, and sings the death-warrant of the waning Wotan and his wavering brood.

The futile and disappearing gods! These are the weird and enchanting unrealities of Wagner's "Nibelungen" scheme. How they potter and fumble with the machinery of the inevitable! How they falter and fail in the presence of inscrutable Truth, which overcomes them like a summer cloud! They parade before us in "Das Rheingold," clad in a clarion of trumpets and trombones, made glorious with the radiance of Wagner's blazing sunlight of sonorous chords; but they are none the less futile. Save one,—Loge, the tempter, Loge, the spirit of indomitable evil, who sows the seed of destruction in the beginning and writes the plot of "Götterdämmerung" with a twist of his finger toward the gleaming gold.

Of all Wagner's philosophic compositions, his psychological conjurations out of the shadowy depths of his own fancy and the equally cloudy shallows of Schopenhauer and Feuerbach, Loge is the most intimately conceived and the most finely wrought. Disappearing, indeed, he is, but by no means futile. The Mephistopheles of the rock-ribbed north, the Lucifer of the hills,

he unites all the subtlety of the metropolitan conception of the sophisticated Goethe with the breadth and spontaneity of the harp-strokes of the storm-bred bard.

Wagner does not paint Loge so brilliantly in text as he does in music. This Satanic tempter of the wise ones is an operatic character raised to the seventh power. His words are unconvincing without his music, which charges them and him with a boundless significance. Never once in all his flickering career does he utter a single sentence of such elemental majesty as that of Boito's Mefistofele: "Son lo spirito che nega." That looming figure of the archlibrettist of Tuscany spreads the shadow of contemporaneous sophistication across the operatic firmament. Standing with his defiant gaze upon the throne of the many-voiced invisible, he is a lyric reincarnation of the epic Lucifer of Milton.

Loge is no such mighty spirit. He comes upon the scene whining excuses for an ill-done errand. He slips, he slides, he wriggles away. He is the aurora of casuistry, the embodiment of the elusive. The flickering fire is his outward manifestation. He is mean. He is a sneak. But he is the intellectual superior of the entire coterie of futile gods, and he laughs at their infantile incapacity. Poor old Wotan! He

mumbles in his beard that he cannot do mental tricks as Loge can. A simple-minded old god is he, who would gladly cheat the lumbering giants out of their guerdon, but does not know how. So he turns to Loge, who comes waving and caracoling upon the scene — to what theme? That of the fire! A theme which is as elusive as his nature, a theme which has neither beginning nor end, which wanders along in the form of an indefinite decimal of harmony and never for an instant establishes a definite tonality.

Every movement of Loge, every betrayal of a new thought formed in his shifty mind, is accompanied by an utterance of this motive in the orchestra. Not once in "Das Rheingold" does the theme rest itself upon the firm foundations of a major triad. Chromatic in form, it is chromatic, chameleon-like in color. It is the real Loge. It is a musical triumph, because in terms of purely descriptive imitation it expresses a psychologic study. The music is the shifting, flickering, changeful, destroying fire; the fire is the soul of Loge and the first fruit of perdition.

The theme returns in the last scene of "Die Walküre," when Wotan, the helpless father, has put his best-beloved to sleep. He is to surround her with a belt of guardian fire. Fire is the soul of Loge, a lovely protector for unconscious

virtue! Again we hear the fire music, but only for fire. Loge, most subtle of the gods of the field, has to all appearances been the most futile. He has disappeared already. But now his fire, at any rate, returns and beams beneficently from a base of diatonic major harmonies with tinkling of blissful bells. Did Wagner realize the fathomless depths of his own sarcasm here? Or is it all a beautiful chance?

In the last scene of "Siegfried" there is an echo of the Loge theme, but it means almost nothing. The same echo is heard in "Götterdämmerung," Act I. In Act III. of the same drama, when Brünnhilde seizes the torch to fire the funeral pyre whose flames shall set all Walhalla in a blaze, the Loge chromatics, together with a gleam of the ring theme, flashes up, but it is as futile as the almost-forgotten Loge. Here was Wagner's opportunity to tell the truth about his own secret conception of this vast phantasmagoria of fact and fable. At the very end of "Das Rheingold" the crafty one says:

> "A feverish fancy
> Doth woo me to wander
> Forth in flickering fire:
> To burn and waste them
> Who bound me erewhile.
> Rather than be
> Thus blindly engulfed,
> Even were they of gods the most godlike."

No Walhalla for the free spirit of flame, but liberty and the ultimate destruction of these pitiful children of the light. Wagner might have let the glittering chromatics of the fire theme rise just once into a peal of majestic power in the end of "Götterdämmerung," when Wotan and all his hosts sat helpless amid the blazing of Walhalla. It is Loge's triumph, is it not? Oh, yes, of course, it is the stupendous immolation of Brünnhilde, with the unutterable thought behind it and the regeneration of the earth before it. But Loge would have seen in it nothing but the victory of the eternal principle of destruction, which Wagner epitomized even better than he knew in his musical characterization of the fire-fiend.

What was really in Wagner's mind when he wrote that extraordinarily beautiful passage of song for Loge in the first scene of "Das Rheingold"?

"Where life ebbeth and floweth
In flood and earth and air,
All asked I,
Ever inquiring,
Where sinew doth reign,
And seedlings are rooted,
What well a man
Could mightier deem
Than woman's wonderful worth."

Again, it is not the text, but the marvellous burst of throbbing melody that tells the thought in Wagner's mind. But does it tell all? Study well the phrases in the score. Are they sincere, or does Wagner shadow forth just a suspicion of the dishonesty which lurks in the utterance? Loge knows that he has yet his trump card, the gold of the Rhine, to play; and either he believes that will be a winning card, or he is not the devil, after all.

What, then, becomes of this manifestation of Wagnerian philosophy, this joyous tempter of wooden gods? At the end of "Das Rheingold" his personal career ends. Henceforth only his soul hovers about us. Like the genie who, according to the veracious chronicler of the "Arabian Nights," had sinned against Solomon, he was shut up in a box, the old earth itself. He fades out of sight to reappear only in a materialistic exhibit of steam and red fire. A sad end, indeed, for such a thoughtful representation of sophistry. "Two special powers," says M. Taine, "lead mankind, — impulse and idea." Loge was the embodiment of idea. Farewell to thee, Idea. Henceforth let impulse lead us onward to love and death. Yet shall not Idea, subtle, crafty, remorseless, triumph at last?

The foil to Loge is Wotan, foil and victim. What a sorrowful spectacle is this unfortunate master of the gods, who takes up Loge because that craftsman has brains, and yet cannot withstand the temptations of his own devil! Jupiter did not need a devil to lead him astray. A neatly turned ankle or a pair of melting eyes sufficed to lure Zeus from Olympus. The world and the flesh were equal to his undoing. But here is a primitive god, manufactured out of the imagination of a wholly unsophisticated people, far removed from the polish and culture of the Greeks, and he cannot sin in hot blood. First of all, he must be tempted by a fiend, who lures him with the promise of unlimited power. Zeus had his power ready-made.

Wotan was right. What was a god to do who was short of power? Preposterous! He could not afford to allow some one else to get the gold and make the ring. Alberich already had it. What was to be done? Get it away from him, and so save the Walhalla dynasty from being dethroned. Wise Wotan! It never occurred to him that Loge was planning just that *coup*.

Here is a chief god whose power rests upon contracts, yet who does not know how to make

an advantageous bargain with two stupid giants! Pity the sorrows of the one-eyed god! He is not omnipotent. He is surrounded by enemies, and afar off looms the fathomless abyss of the dusk of the gods, the pall of Ragnarok, the last battle. A fortress must he have, and heroes culled by the aerial Valkyrs from the slain of all the world to fight for Walhalla in the final hour.

Self-preservation is the selfish motive of Wotan's sin. He haggles with Fafner and Fasolt for a haven of refuge, and offers a price he knows he dare not pay. Without Freia, the goddess of youth, he must wither. What does all this mean? Simply that Wotan was the subject of a moral law outside of and above him. Was it strange that the primitive mind could not conceive a god who was himself the law?

Not at all; for, after all, these children of the ages made deities of human attributes, — power, knowledge, passion, beauty, swiftness. They knew all these attributes were subject to the moral law, for the blackest years of Egypt had not obscured the truth that the wages of sin is death. In "Das Rheingold" Wotan falls a prey to the moral law as interpreted to him by the giants. In "Die Walküre" he again makes a foolish effort to dodge it, and the outraged

majesty of Fricka demands revenge. What a futile god!

The figure of Wotan is heroic only in "Die Walküre." Here we find the old god at bay. In "Rheingold" he is a feeble plotter; in "Walküre" he faces the inevitable and fights in the last ditch. In "Siegfried" he has become a garrulous dotard, maundering about the earth, impotent and puerile, quibbling in childish conundrums with a shifty dwarf, pledging a head he would not sacrifice, waiting for the defiant act of the youthful hero, and enacting the silly mummery of opposing him with the spear which he knows the boy despises.

"In vain! I cannot hinder thee!" he tragically exclaims, as he stalks off the stage and into the gallery of properties which Wagner reserves for destruction in the last scene of all. And this is the All-Father, the Thunderer of the Norse mythology, the supine creature of moral laws which his pitiable nature cannot grasp and which he feebly strives throughout the whole story to escape.

What music has Wagner evolved to body forth the traits and accessories of this godless deity? The Walhall theme, which identifies with the god the stone walls of his stronghold; the spear motive, which speaks in splendid

accents of the firmness of sacred obligations, broken by Wotan in the very first scene of the tragedy; Wotan's anger; Wotan's distress; Wotan the wanderer; Wotan's bequest of the inheritance of the world. All these themes depict this entangled god in the meshes of circumstance. There is not a single motive setting forth any inherent grandeur of character, any great or noble thought or passion blazing from his soul.

Walhall was Wotan's chapel of refuge. The spear's holy runes were outside of his personality and greater than it. His anger was awakened by the disobedience of a loving daughter who sought to be what she had always been, the heart's wish of the god. The distress was the fruit of a realization that the stern grip of the moral law was strangling the whole coterie of Walhall because of its master's sins.

Wotan the wanderer, — what a desolate succession of changing tonalities, telling of a god without a local habitation or a name, a god whose occupation was literally gone! The bequest theme tells of this doddering deity's resignation of power in favor of youth and love, two honest agencies much better fitted to carry on the administration of a world than trickery and subterfuge.

Carlyle in his "French Revolution" harps upon the end that was contained in the beginning. "Cast forth thy act, thy word," again in his "Sartor Resartus" he says, "into the ever working universe; it is a seed grain that cannot die; unnoticed to-day (says one) it will be found flourishing as a banyan grove (perhaps also as a hemlock forest) after a thousand years." The Scripture has tersely summarized the whole matter in the prophetic declaration that the wages of sin is death.

Wotan's original sin in cheating the giants spreads itself into the hemlock forest of a mighty tragedy, but for the god himself the Biblical maxim stands in letters of fire. And here mark the awful majesty of the Norse myth. Wotan and all his brood fall victims in the end to the physical manifestation of the evil spirit, Loge.

They are burned in Walhalla. The flickering fire singes out the last vestiges of this rotten dynasty. The spirit of temptation wreaks its own vengeance upon the tempted. "Son lo spirito che nega." The Mephistophelian principle of negation wipes the futile gods off the firmament. Was there any touch of Schopenhauer or Buddha in this? Not a whiff. It was pure, stern, primeval morality. It was unsophisticated man's

recognition of the inexorable justice of the moral law.

How infinitely grander this conception is than the flimsy and artificial doctrines of the seduction and spear cure in "Parsifal"! In the consecrational festival play all is manufactured, all is artificial. The entire external machinery of the thing is a cheap theatrical pose. In "Der Ring des Nibelungen" the ethics are the common sense of a people, nay, of whole races, sprung from the mystic Aryan source and filtered through the anxious thought of a hundred tribes that speculated under the inspiring stars across the valleys and plains of all Europe.

How much of all this did Wagner perceive when he was constructing his extraordinary drama in four plays? His scheme, according to his own words, contemplated the representation of the gods as writhing in helplessness under the burden imposed by their own transgression of the law. This burden could be removed only by the action of a free agent, a man, whose deeds were all his own. After Titanic preparation Wagner places this man before us in the person of Siegfried.

His death is the vicarious sacrifice for the gods. In order to get him killed Wagner writes a whole drama, a mighty one indeed, in which this noble

hero is made to commit a crime while under the influence of enchantment. He is slain for that crime by Hagen, who knows that he is innocent, and who contrived the whole plot simply to have an excuse for killing him, in order to get back the Nibelungs' ring.

What evidence is there that Wagner perceived the full significance of the final triumph of Loge over the erring Wotan? Not one jot. That the idea occurred to him in its purely external and physical form is proved by a passage in the final speech of Brünnhilde:

> "Fly home, ye ravens!
> Rede it in Walhalla
> What here on the Rhine ye have heard!
> To Brünnhilde's rock
> Go round about.
> Yet Loge burns there:
> Walhall bid him revisit!
> Draweth near in gloom
> The dusk of the gods.
> Thus, casting my torch,
> I kindle Walhalla's towers."

And that is all. Yet the thought lurks always beneath the surface of the tragedy. Wotan, the father and master of the futile and disappearing gods, fell a victim to evil itself, to evil which in the consuming power of flickering fire was its own executioner.

II. — THE WOMAN AND THE SERPENT

I will put enmity between thee and the serpent.
GENESIS iii. 15.

WAGNER'S gallery of portraits of women has been much praised. Senta, mooning by her idle spinning-wheel and waiting the time when she might cast her pure spirit on the stained bosom of the ocean rover and so save him another seven years' damnation; Elsa, wavering between faith and doubt and finally rushing to destruction out of sheer curiosity; the holy Elizabeth, praying for the life of him who had committed against her the deadliest of all sins, gross infidelity, the sanctified Elizabeth, sweetest, purest, most adorable of all Wagner's heroines; the blazing torch of human passion, Isolde, the primeval, unconventional woman; and Brünnhilde, the wish maid, the sleeping beauty, the waking avenger and liberator, — all these have been praised by learned commentators in divers tongues.

Wagner was a student of women. He married two, and there are also many unpublished letters. He wrote " Tristan und Isolde " on the shores of

Lucerne, where Isolde's real name was Mathilde. In the end he was dominated by a woman, but it may be doubted whether he ever really comprehended the "ewig weibliche," of which he made such clever theatrical use. There is not a very convincing feminine element in "Das Rheingold." The first disclosure is of three Rhein daughters sporting in the gauzy depths of their native element and singing in a language all their own around a nugget of gold of which strange lies are told. It is said that any person who makes a ring of that gold will have power and dominion over the world. The truth is that whosoever possesses that ring is bound to get into trouble, because a filthy little black dwarf will place a freak's curse upon it.

These three fish-tailed maidens, frisking in the sallow glare of the shaded spot-light, youthful of aspect, ebullient of manner, irreproachable in morals, so far as one can judge from their treatment of the winsome Alberich, outlive the futile and disappearing gods. They come to the surface in the final scene of "Götterdämmerung," and wrest back their ring from the hands of Hagen, whom they incontinently drown in their dotted Swiss habitation. There must be a deep moral lesson somewhere in this. What is it? Possibly it signifies that good girls are always

triumphant in the end. At any rate, it accentuates the pitiable feebleness of the mighty ones of Walhall.

Another feminine figure in the foreword of the trilogy is the excellent Erda. This portentous poser in green light and veiling makes two appearances in the course of the tragedy. The first is in "Rheingold" and the second in "Siegfried." She occupies a position somewhat similar to that of a Greek chorus. She helps the audience to a comprehension of what the rather incomprehensible gods are doing. She always comes to the surface when Wotan is "stumped."

The first time she comes when he is about to commit an act of folly. She tells him to get rid of the ring which he had employed so much strategy to procure. He promptly obeys her, although he has never seen her before, and was pretty thoroughly astonished by her unexpected appearance. The second time she discloses herself when Wotan is sorely in need of more sound advice. We now learn that Wotan, who in "Rheingold" had declared that he intended to know more of the lady, has not wasted his time in idle prating. The nine Valkyrs are the living proofs of this. Erda is plainly not at all pleased to meet her old friend again. She gives him another dark and dismal warning, and leaves

him to chew the cud of his own cheerful reflection.

Freia, the charming young woman for whom the giants wrangle, is a mere figure in "Rheingold." She might as well be a piece of stage property. She counts for nothing else. She has no more dramatic significance than the lumps of gold which the dwarfs lug upon their straining shoulders. She belongs to the same category as the delectable Donner and Froh, who stand about in odd corners and try desperately to look as if they were Vulcan and Apollo, whereas they are neither.

One feminine character stands alone in "Rheingold." The virtuous Fricka, type of that species of amiable wife who regards all mortal desire as utterly depraved and who would joy to wrap herself in a spotless mantle of *noli me tangere* and let her husband worship her on bended knees outside the portals of her holy temple, — she is the woman with a mission in this splendid tragedy of futile gods and fumbling mortals.

But Fricka is right, after all. If Wotan had listened to her advice, he would have come out of all his difficulties much better. The fount of misfortune, as far as Fricka is concerned, was her failure to brush the dust off her own garments in the day of the first temptation. Loge

knew where to touch the quick of her woman's weakness. "Will the gold make pretty ornaments for women?" she asked; and Loge, who, being the spirit of evil, well knew the root, declared that there was nothing which it could do better than that. And so Fricka stood actionless while Wotan went down to Niebelheim to rape the gold from Alberich.

Short-sighted Fricka! Mean-spirited Fricka! True woman Fricka! When she has tacitly consented to the theft of the gold, what does she? Seeing her poor old one-eyed husband struggling to escape the consequences of his guilt by creating a race of free agents to make the atonement for him, she pounces upon him with a stern demand that Siegmund shall die for violating her standards of virtue. But who ever expected to find a consistent logic in the mind of fair woman, even a resident of high Olympus?

Having turned upon the hand that sought to benefit her, what does she? She joins the procession of the futile and disappearing gods. Fricka mounts her ram-hauled chariot and slides away into the past, only to reappear in the chaste and general conflagration of the last great scene. She has served her purpose. She has made the drama of "Siegfried" imperatively necessary.

Siegmund being slain in answer to her inexorable demand, Brünnhilde must be punished for trying to carry out Wotan's original plot. Of course that is well enough. If Brünnhilde had had her way, there never would have been any drama of "Siegfried" and consequently no "Götterdämmerung." But without Siegfried things cannot go on. Sieglinde must hie her to the dark forest in the east, there to sob out her sweet but shadowed young life, and leave to the whining Mime the nursery task of rearing the youthful Volsung.

So much for the eternal feminine in the celestial circle of the trilogy. Poor little Gutrune! She's worth the whole lot of them. She at least was a gentle, soulful, loving woman, who was not troubling her spirit with a desire for gold, but who was possessed of an honest ambition to be the wife of the most important gentleman of the district. Social position was not what she sought, for she had that already. She was a Gibichung, which was the same in the Rhine valley as being a Biddle in Philadelphia. No; what she yearned for was distinction. She would have been a lady of the White House, if possible, had she lived in our time. Anyhow, she was a woman with whom one can sympathize, for she really liked Siegfried.

Last but not least of the "Rheingold" coterie are the giants. Fafner is an admirable character. He knows just what he wishes and he goes straight to the point. First of all, he wishes to possess himself of Freia because she would serve two purposes; namely, to keep house and cook for him and at the same time to preserve his youth. But the lumbering Fasolt, that overgrown blond basso, must go and fall in love with the simpering little soprano leggiere. How came Wagner not to remember the law of operatic tradition?

It is only another instance of his lack of the sense of humor. Fafner very properly disposes of Fasolt and goes off with the gold. And here follows one of the genuinely poetic touches of the tragedy. This scaly miser who has the hoard, the tarnhelm, and the ring, and who simply snuggles them up in a cave without reaping a single benefit from their possession, is put out of the drama by Siegfried, the embodiment of careless youth, hot blood, and human passion. Possibly Wagner thought of this, and possibly he did not; but at any rate we may do so, and thus intensify our poetic mood.

What effect has the disappearance of the futile gods upon the dramatic development of the story? Wotan is the hero of "Rheingold"

and "Walküre." These two sections of the drama are concerned with the adventures of a god in search of a method of government. The hero of "Siegfried" and "Götterdämmerung" is Siegfried, a mortal in search of a *raison d'être*. The former plays bad politics and learns too late that in statecraft as in business honesty is the best policy. The latter follows the inspirations of youth and nature, and comes to grief because he is the Parsifal of the north, a "guileless fool."

Musically "Rheingold" is a vorspiel. It introduces a few fundamental themes, rings the harmonic changes on them, and makes way for the real first movement, "Die Walküre." Of this work the music is the salvation, for its second act is dramatically so feeble, so ill-made, and so prosy that it would drive people out of the theatre were it not for its melodic richness. Fricka's lecture of Wotan, one of the vital scenes of the whole trilogy, is dramatically a bore; but musically it is strong and interesting, and it approaches its end with one of the most imposing phrases conceived by the wizard of Bayreuth, the phrase with which Fricka intones the words: —

"Deiner ew'gen Gattin
Heilige Ehre
Schirme heut' ihr Schild."

"The holy honor of thy eternal spouse as a shield this day protects her." That is Wagner's one proclamation of the majesty of Fricka and the chastity of the law which she represented. It is the finest musical thought in the whole second act of "Die Walküre," for, after all, the much-vaunted "Todesverkündigung" is a situation rather than a theme. The brass melody of it is not genuinely imposing, especially when the impersonator of Brünnhilde does not know how to appear mysterious and foreboding. The fight in the clouds is one of Wagner's impracticable conceptions. When it is perfectly executed, it is unconvincing; when it is not, it is quite incomprehensible, and sometimes it is even comic.

Musically "Die Walküre" consists of the first and last acts, and the first really begins with the duet between Siegmund and Sieglinde. All that goes before is preparation, interesting by reason of its musical narrative, but much too prolix, as all Wagner's explanations are. Siegmund's narrative is three times as long as is necessary to afford a reason for the hatred of Hunding. It would have been more subtle and more dramatic, anyhow, to let Hunding's thirst for vengeance rest entirely upon his discovery of the interest of his wife and the visitor for each other.

But let that pass. The duet of Siegmund and Sieglinde is generally accepted as one of Wagner's great achievements in sustained melody. The love-song is babbled now by musical babes. It is very pretty, and it has a manly ring, which we may all admire. But the third act of "Die Walküre" dwells from beginning to end in the sunlit regions of genius.

The feebleness of Wotan here loses itself in a sea of infinite pathos. The power of the magic hand of Wagner in the creation of dramatic atmosphere is seen in the tumultuous storming of the Valkyrs through the inky air. "How now, ye secret black and midnight hags; what is 't ye do?" The salutation of Macbeth to the witches pales before the lightnings of the winged steeds. Into the midst of this festival of the furies plunges the ill-assorted pair, Brünnhilde and Sieglinde.

Thundering upon their traces comes Wotan, the irate god, whose well-meant efforts to escape the complications wrought by his own misdeeds have been thwarted by the erring wish maiden. Hearken to the old scold berating his frightened daughters: "Out with ye, hussies. Your sister has been disobedient. Speak to her, and I 'll whip ye, too."

Slinking away into the waning storm, they

leave the father and the foolishly loving daughter together. The mighty seething of the musical sea subsides, leaving a deep underrunning swell of feeling. The billowing rush of the Valkyr theme gives way to the plaintive flow of the motive of Brünnhilde's pleading, one of the most poignantly expressive melodies ever conceived by Wagner. How it wells upward in the tender voices of the wood wind!

The stricken Valkyr grovels at the feet of the perplexed Wotan. What will he do with her? The two engage in a long and unnecessary wordy wrangle over the deed of the goddess. Wagner must talk, talk, talk. He is a German dramatist. His music alone saves him from perdition. Prate as he may of the organic union of the arts, the magic of melody and harmony is his wand of transformation.

With that he lifts the tiresome rehearsal of the incidents of "Rheingold" by Wotan to eloquence. With that he changes the hair-splitting of Tristan and Isolde to the most passionate of love duets. With that he makes almost a miracle of Siegfried's condensed narrative in the last act of "Götterdämmerung." The theory is a perfect one; Wagner's practice is wholly faulty. His music saves him. He is sometimes no better than an old-fashioned opera librettist, and

writes long pages of bald text simply in order to clothe them with musical glory.

Brünnhilde complains: "Why are you angry at me, father?" He answers, "You know well enough what you 've done." "You told me to do it," says she. "But afterward I told you not to do it," says he. "But you really did n't mean that. You wished me to protect Siegmund," declares Brünnhilde. "You made the other order because you were afraid of Fricka." And then Brünnhilde takes forty lines to tell Wotan what she did, which both he and we already know. Wotan takes just forty lines more to tell Brünnhilde that while he has been struggling with his problems she has had nothing to do but enjoy herself (how many mortal fathers talk thus to their daughters)! and that now he has no further use for her light soul.

Thus they bandy words till finally we come to Hecuba. Wotan tells her that she is to be put to sleep and that the man who awakens her shall have her. She begs for the protection of the magic fire, and this far-seeing god stares amazed and enraptured at the birth of a new idea. Glorious! He will commit this precious jewel of his soul to the guardianship of his arch enemy, Loge, the fire spirit, the treacherous,

the shifty, the ultimate destroyer, not only of Brünnhilde, but of Walhalla and its futile brood.

Oh, Wagner, how much more prescient were the skalds than thou! But who thinks of all this while the performance is in progress? No one. The triumphant music swells to the very bursting point of emotional rhapsody. The entrance of the farewell of Wotan is one of the sublimest conceptions of the master craftsman in tone.

But there is a moment, a great, overmastering, torrential moment, in this scene, which is equalled only once or twice elsewhere in the trilogy. It is the moment when Brünnhilde and Wotan stand and gaze one upon the other, like the transformed Tristan and Isolde, and the plaintive, pitiful motive of the Valkyr's pleading rises into a tremendous, pealing burst of passionate yearning, which sets the whole orchestra reeling and rocking with the poignancy of its melody and wrings the tears from the eyes of the listener.

That is the climax of "Die Walküre." It is the victory of the child's love over the futile and disappearing All-Father. It is the last utterance of the majesty of Walhalla. Thenceforward godhood disappears not only from Brünnhilde,

but from all Walhalla. The human hero is now to come, to see, and to command.

And as the curtain slowly shuts the pathetic figures from our sight, Loge — flickering, fluttering Loge — satisfied for once that he is master of the situation, sings out the comedy in the major mode. The spiritual tonality of Loge for once is fixed and inexorable. The sleep of Brünnhilde is the prologue to her immolation, and the fire at her bedside is the precursor of the fire of her funeral pyre which shall engulf the futile gods. "Rest, perturbed spirit." Rest in the victorious publication of thy conquest in fundamental harmonies. A primeval element art thou not, but a physical investiture of the shifting soul. Thou art the master of this hour — yea, even of the unconscious Brünnhilde and the equally unconscious Wagner. He builded better than he knew. The seed of the serpent hath bruised the heel of the woman.

III. — BACK-WORLDS GODS AND OVER-WOMAN

> And those same torches, flaring by her bed,
> Lighted her downward path among the dead.
>
> MELEAGER.
>
> (*Translated by* JANE MINOT SEDGWICK.)

THE drama of "Siegfried" opens with a reintroduction of one of Wagner's most subtle studies. Mime in "Rheingold" plays almost no part at all. There the local interest of Niebelheim is centred in that peevish parody of Napoleonic ambition, Alberich, whose curse is launched upon the entire succeeding series of incidents. In "Siegfried" Alberich is shown to us a helpless watcher on the outskirts of events, the complement of the wondering Wotan.

Both of the principal workers on the beginning of the web have been forced to let the threads slip from their feeble hands. Siegfried, the young, hot-blooded embodiment of humanity, and Mime, the last receptacle of underground craft and cunning, struggle for the supremacy. Alberich is absurd.

The battle of the dwarfs in the first scene of the second act is one of Wagner's pieces of

grotesquery. Did he see the ridiculous aspect of it? One can hardly believe so. He seems to take it very seriously, but it refuses to be serious. Mime, however, is a genuine creation. Search opera from its inception to the disclosure of this extraordinary work and you will not find another such product of the imagination. Mime is the perfect type of a low cunning mind plotting to use a noble and generous nature for its own ends and then to consign that nature to destruction.

A ward politician or a Wall Street operator Mime might have been in a more advanced state of society. It was his misfortune and not his fault that he was born a cave-dweller. Wagner falls into ludicrous difficulties in his endeavors to disclose the inner workings of this nature. In the first act he has recourse to the old-fashioned operatic duet, in which two persons standing at opposite sides of the stage bellow antagonistic sentiments at the top of their lungs, yet do not hear each other.

The factitious veritism of the music drama crumbles into absurdity in the presence of this illogical scene. Wagner as frankly asks us to accept the unreal conventions of the stage as ever did Donizetti or Meyerbeer. And this, too, in the midst of his most elaborate and

pretentious creation. But here again music, heavenly maid, saves the situation. The splendor of the climax of the forging episode dazzles judgment. One cannot analyze the dramatic verities when his heart is thumping under his ribs with the trip-hammer rhythm of this tremendous composition.

In the second act, when Mime is endeavoring to induce Siegfried to take the potion, we are asked to understand that the bird has warned Seigfried, and that the hero is enabled to discern behind Mime's utterances the real meanings which he strives to conceal. Wagner's conception was dramatically impracticable, and so he makes Mime utter his secret thoughts aloud, so that we, as well as Siegfried, may know them.

It is a cumbersome and feeble device. Here again, however, the music comes to the dramatist's aid. The exquisitely artistic contrast between the craft and malice of Mime and the ingenuousness of the youthful hero is expressed perfectly by the opposing natures of their musical measures, and a final touch of most eloquent suggestion is supplied by the half-whispered instrumental repetition of the bird phrase. This is dramatic music of the most potent.

The keynote of Mime is sounded in the

orchestra in the beginning of Act I. with the motive of reflection, — that hollow, sinister duet of two bassoons, so devilish, so serpentine in the mockery of its descending thirds. Whoever before heard the lascivious harmony of the third made to chant a psalm of mischief? Deep reflection, far-sighted wickedness, lies in those few sinister, sepulchral notes, and as the curtain rises and shows us the shaggy little elf bent hopeless over his forging and searching his evil mind for some solution of the problem of the lost hoard, we fall with him into a frame of mind fit for treasons.

And Loge? Is the embodiment of craft absent? Not he. Loge deserts not his kind. In the flickering flame of the forge he lurks in waiting. He will weld the sword "Nothung," which was shivered on Wotan's spear, and this time it will shatter that spear and break the power of the futile and disappearing gods. Loge will answer the call of Siegfried and rise in his might. Joyously will he blaze to melt the splinters, for this forging is but another act in the drama of his triumph. How can the dotard Wotan sit by the hearthstone playing at riddles with Mime and not feel the breath of Loge on his neck?

What a new and unheard of thing is the vocal

style of Mime! The creation of this weird recitation is one of Wagner's most notable achievements. The sharp, cackling treble staccato, which sinks ever and anon into an indescribable gurgle of subterranean low tones and again rises to a shrill and infantile falsetto, — this is something that no old-time musician, who appealed to the outward ear alone, could ever have conceived. Its importance in the expression of grotesque and grim humor cannot be overestimated. It is neither speech nor song. It is not recitative. It is not declamation. It is simply the snarling, the barking, the whining of malice, cowardice, and sneaking treachery. It is the very thing itself that Wagner sought. It was a triumph of genius.

Has it ever occurred to you, gentle reader, that up to the last act of " Siegfried " this same music of Mime supplies the only psychologic element in the play so far as the musical part is concerned? Mime is the one scheming, introspective character in the work. Every musical thought in the score which is connected with him reveals an inner life. The rest is nearly all scenic or external music.

Siegfried's entrance is bodied forth in a gust of forest freshness sweeping into the noisome air of the cavern. The famous wanderlied of the

youth is not introspective. It breathes not the yearning of the hero for a free life, but the spirit of the unbounded world itself. It is a song of the receding horizon.

The bandying of conundrums between Wotan and Mime leaves all the psychology to the dwarf. The rest is commemorative. It is a repetition of old themes to recall Siegmund and Sieglinde, the Giants and their unrequited labor, Walhall and its vanishing limelight glories. Take again the opening scene of Act II. How much introspection is there in Wotan's interesting interview with the unseen Fafner? Atmospheric, indeed, this music is, but not psychologic. It has a very suspicious resemblance to the famous scene before the tomb of Ninus in "Semiramide." But it is conducted more decorously, and instead of "Oh, horror!" we hear the more comforting "Lass't mich schlafen."

In the scene which follows we are presented with the picture of the young hero reclining under a linden tree and reflecting on his unique position in the primeval world. He hears the murmur of the wind among the branches of the trees and watches the shadows play at hide and seek. The music is purely descriptive and scenic. A bird carols among the foliage. It is a strain of

unaffected melody, and surely none would affront a cheerful birdling by charging it with psychologic intent.

The young man, seeking for some channel of cheerful communication with his own antecedents, tries to fashion a pipe on which to imitate the bird's lay. In vain. So, forth with the familiar waldhorn and therewith wind a challenging blast. How did Siegfried learn his own musical theme? There is a psychologic tangle here, but it was in the thinking of Wagner, not in that of the hero. Siegfried had no business to know that there was an orchestra and that he had a theme. But let that pass.

Behold Fafner, clad in the shapeless form of a thing that never was, lumbering out of the cavern and wagging his sapient head and bannered tail with the aid of all too visible wires. Oh, Siegfried and Fafner, Fafner and Siegfried, which of ye is the more comic? Was it not cruel to place a "treasure of the world," a "smiling hero," in such a position, to make him do combat amid hissing steam and the shock of thunderous battle music with a most disillusioning dragon of papier-maché? Again hear the external music, the sword and the vigor of the young man.

After the fight the bird sings once more, this

time in a soprano voice and with text. Mime enters and psychology reappears. After Mime's death, more external music, till the bird tells of the enchanted Princess asleep on the mountain top, and then there is a burst of hot blood, a rush of musical energy which has in it something more than mere external description. Nevertheless, in all music there is nothing else which so clearly demonstrates the ease with which the purely pictorial in the tone art may be confounded with the introspective as this second act of "Siegfried," for here the mood of nature and the mood of the chief actor, whose soul is to be laid bare, are one.

With the opening of Act III. we have the scene between Wotan and Erda. Here, again, the character of the music is chiefly descriptive. The storm is contrasted with the vague tonalities and muted voicing of Erda's music. After the spear of Wotan is shattered by the rewelded "Nothung," Loge fills the mountains with his radiance and his shimmering music. The last of the futile and disappearing gods has passed from the scene of action. The human drama which is to lead to the dusk of the high ones has begun. Loge's labor is almost completed.

With the change from the pealing music to which Siegfried ascends the mountain to the

long-drawn strains of the strings which lead him to the couch of his desire, we enter upon a scene of soul revelation. What a marvellous inspiration of genius is the awakening of Brünnhilde! She went to sleep a weeping, supplicating goddess, deprived of her divinity. She wakes to the majestic chords which announce her assumption of a grander divinity, the might and majesty of perfect womanhood. The duo between her and Siegfried is all psychologic, not subtle, for the blazing of passion is not subtle, but none the less the delineation of an inward state.

Of all the dramas of the tetralogy "Siegfried" is that in which pure beauty is most plentiful. Here is a problem for musical philosophers. Is Strauss not a maker, but a product? Is the embodiment of subtle psychologic problems in tone hostile to unaffected beauty? Must the lyric drama follow the march of symphonic music into the screaming regions of the Strauss soul analysis? "Siegfried" is quite devoid of the elements of tragedy. The death of Fafner is not tragic; on the contrary, it is comic. There is even a touch of bathos in the dying speech of the transmogrified Bottom of the Wagnerian drama. The conundrum scene is childish. The bird belongs to the world of the infantile fairy tale. But the spirit of buoyant

youth is in the work. Its music is nearly all external, and unaffectedly beautiful.

"Siegfried," revelling in purely descriptive music, devoid of mental sickness contracted from much study of Schopenhauer or Nietzsche, breathes the spirit of a free world's youth.

Little is left to be said, or much, for "Götterdämmerung" must be treated as a separate drama or dismissed shortly in the light of what has already been written. In this drama we come to the drawing together of the threads, the stretto of the dream fugue. Behold Brünnhilde, who has given all her wisdom to Siegfried and hence has none left for herself, sending him out in quest of further reputation as a mighty hero. There is something pathetic in this and also pitiably modern. Must husbands have had outings in the elemental days even as now? Was the epic man inconstant of soul? Ah Brünnhilde! A wise woman would go with him. It is not good for man to be alone.

Siegfried arrives at the domicile of the desirable Gibichung family and accepts an unknown drink from a pretty girl he never saw before. His rusticity beams from his guileless countenance, and to Hagen, the experienced one, he is as the ripe pear on the low-hanging bough. Pitiable weakling Siegfried! Call ye this a hero of all

the world? Pitiable Gunther, you do well to swear blood brotherhood with him. You are a well-mated pair. Pitiable Gutrune! Siegfried was not for you, though your drink did make him forget that he remembered and dream that he forgot.

In the hands of Hagen, the only really clever person in the drama, these three are as clay in the hands of the potter. Hagen could not command success, because Loge was more powerful than he, and the ultimate ruin of the gods would have been deferred had Hagen gained possession of the accursed ring; but he deserved success, and that, as Sempronius was long ago informed, was something worthy of respect.

Two elements of this final drama remain confronting us. They are the most tremendous of all Wagner's heroines, the completed woman, Brünnhilde, and the most potent of all psychologic music outside of "Tristan und Isolde." When Siegfried, in the end of the drama bearing his name, hurls the flood of human love at the reduced Valkyr, he awakens in her that which lifts her above principalities and kingdoms.

> "Indeed I love thee. Come,
> Yield thyself up — my hopes and thine are one:
> Accomplish thou my manhood and thyself;
> Lay thy sweet hands in mine and trust to me."

Almost might Tennyson have substituted his words for those of Wagner, and truly they are more graceful. In "Götterdämmerung" we find Brünnhilde with her womanhood completed. Filled full to the lips and eyes with love, she is risen to a majesty which as the laughing Valkyr she never knew. Compared with her Olympian splendor, the fumbling weakness of her sire becomes indeed pitiable. With what heroine is she to be compared? Set her for a moment over against Isolde, who also died upon her true love's body.

The philosophy of negation which saturates "Tristan und Isolde" is a deadly foe to your piping enthusiasm. The draining of the cup of death, averted by the temporizing policy of the silly Brangäne, would never have assumed the tragic proportions of Brünnhilde's terrible oath upon the spear. The wounded love of Isolde dwindles to petulance when brought to the side of the outraged majesty of the chaste and glorious Valkyr wife.

Look upon the two in the last scenes of their respective tragedies. Isolde lays her down to die of a broken heart beside her dead lover, hymning in rapt ecstatic phrase, seeing in the vision of her own dissolution the new light streaming from his eyes and his heart beating in his

chilled breast. It is sweet, so sweet. It is more honeyed than the dirge of Shelley for Adonais, or the exquisitely musical "Archete, Sikelikai, to pentheon archete, Moisai," of Moschus over the ashes of Bion. It is love's threnody in the realms of eternal moonlight, where the cypress shadows of a pessimistic philosophy shelter the lemur of blank negation.

Brünnhilde, too, beholds the sunny light streaming from her hero's dead eyes, but how her apostrophe to him rings with brave and hopeful praise! There is no sweating sickness of the soul here, but the proclamation of a grand personality. And then through prayer this supreme woman passes to prophecy:

"Ye gods who guard
Our gazes for ever,
Turn not away
From my waxing distress."

And but a moment later that sublime passage:

"All things, all things
All I wot now:
All at once is made clear!
Even thy ravens
I hear rustling:
To tell the longed-for tidings
Let them return to their home.
Rest thee! Rest thee, oh god!"

And again:

"Fly home, ye ravens!
Rede it in Walhalla
What here on the Rhine ye have heard!
To Brünnhilde's rock
Go round about,
Yet Loge burns there:
Walhalla bid him revisit!
Draweth near in gloom
The Dusk of the Gods.
Thus, casting my torch,
I kindle Walhall's towers."

Ah, Isolde! How every man that has a heart can echo that marvellous phrase with which Wagner makes Tristan breathe forth his first and last sigh of love insatiable! Queen of the tawny locks and stately tread, thou art first shown to us as a woman of the old barbaric grandeur, hurling the full tide of thy passions against the inexorable advancing prow of Fate. The gates of honor thrown down, thou art but a woman loved and loving; and, mourning over thy lost chastity, art ready to sink into fathomless night with Tristan. After all, thou comest to the pale estate of chill despair and so diest, hymning a last sad canticle of love.

Isolde is beautiful, winsome, desirable. Men

love her, but she does not dominate. Brünnhilde grows from a laughing light-elf to be a stricken woman, and thence is raised by the might of love to the majestic height of abstract womanhood divine. Isolde is a diminuendo; Brünnhilde a crescendo. In her last estate she stands disclosed in overmastering splendor, and mortal man in the honesty of his secret heart knows that, in the presence of such womanhood as this, he is utterly unworthy. And so we come to the end. Brünnhilde has joined hands with Loge and the "Rheingold" prophecy of Erda is fulfilled. The spirit of evil is become the renovator of the earth and all things are purified by fire. And the music! What majestic development of the Erda theme is this we hear in the Dusk of the Gods motive? There, indeed, is a psychological development, equalled only by the extraordinary mystic effects of the combination in Act I. of the themes of forgetfulness and the tarnhelm, by the wonderful recitative of the transformed Siegfried posing as Gunther, and by that highest of all songs without words, the funeral march.

The retirement of the futile and disappearing gods forces the purely human element to the front. The tragedy steadily waxes in power as the feeble ones of Walhalla grow fainter and

the humans take the threads in their hands, till finally the one great, majestic creation of the whole trilogy is seen to be Brünnhilde, the eternal womanhood personified, the light of the world and the glory of Walhalla.

ISOLDE'S SERVING-WOMAN

The daughter of debate,
That discord aye doth sowe.
Verses by Queen Elizabeth in PERCY'S *Reliques.*

IT is an inquiring age. We investigate the domestic habits of the poet or the sandpiper with equal zest. We analyze dress and intellectual states with the keenest delight. Upon all things we speculate, ponder, ring the changes of scrutinizing comment. Thus it chanced upon a day that certain learned Thebans, sitting in the solemn conclave of educational chop-houses, fell upon disputatious views of the profound character of Brangäne in Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde," and there were diverse theories.

Strange it seems to the calm and unprejudiced observer that there should be difference of opinion as to the character of Brangäne. To be sure, the weary mind of the hardened critic never hopes to receive highly intelligent views on such questions from casual or even habitual opera-goers.

When this writer presumed to object to the richness of Edyth Walker's costume as Bran-

gäne, he was told that the woman was of noble birth and that she was not Isolde's maid, but her companion. Also he was told that Miss Walker's costume was approved in Vienna, which concerned him not a jot, seeing that the authority for the interpretation of Brangäne does not rest in Vienna, but in the poem of Wagner.

Louise Homer's conception of Brangäne was deplored by some of the learned Thebans in that it was not heroic. Where are Brangäne's heroics in the drama? Marie Brema, who soared through the New World with a contralto voice and a soprano ambition, always acted Brangäne as if she were a sister of Isolde. She conceived the pleading of the tirewoman in the spirit of the third act of "Die Walküre." But there was no Wotan to kiss the godhood or the scales from her eyes.

Marianne Brandt of blessed memory smote the harp with no uncertain hand. She knew the meaning of Brangäne in those now far-off days when Lili Lehmann was Isolde, Albert Niemann Tristan, Robinson Kurvenal, and Fischer King Mark. "And there were giants in those days." But it is not a question of personal authority. It is a question of direct examination of the poem, of the significance of the drama.

In these days no one studies a Wagnerian play solely at first hand. Is Kundry to be explained? Then search the Scriptures. Read all the old poems, delve among the legends, turn up the sods of centuries. Is Parsifal to be analyzed? Plunge into the Oriental forests and emerge with your Aryan expulsion and return formula; co-ordinate your poetic axes; parallel column your Siegfried, your Ulysses, and your guileless fool. Heaven be thanked, Brangäne is not a mighty heroine of antique fable. She is but a parhelion which dwells near the sun. We may dispose of her with little effort.

Brangäne is not heroic. There is not a line in Wagner's text to justify such a conception of the character. Wagner's Brangäne is a maid, a serving-woman. She is simple-minded, even innocent. In some respects she is foolish. Her one dominating note is devotion to her mistress. She is doglike in nature. She is Isolde's feminine Kurvenal. But she lacks in every essential the emotional and intellectual initiative of Tristan's esquire. She is passive. She is necessarily thus. From the point of view of dramatic character construction she must be so in order to afford an effective foil to Isolde, with whom she is continually placed in contrast. In more subtle but none the less

influential opposition does she stand to Kurvenal, the embodiment of active, working devotion to the master. Brangäne does nothing but what she is bid, and does that wrong.

Her simple-minded innocence leads her to become what the dramatist needs to complete his scheme, an unconscious agent of fate. Acting wholly under the influence of devotion to her mistress, and without sufficient wisdom to foresee the terrible consequences of her deed, she administers to the lovers the potion which drowns their self-control and plunges them into the sea of passion. She does this on the unthinking impulse of the moment, solely because she is frightened out of such wits as she has by her mistress's determination to share with Tristan the drink of death.

Is that a heroic act? Would not a heroic nature have grasped the significance of the moment, and, foreseeing the approaching shame, have acquiesced in Isolde's decision? Nay, more; filled with such devotion as that of Brangäne, raised to a divine ecstasy by innate heroism, she would have swallowed her share of the poison and laid her down at her lady's feet to die, as Kurvenal did at Tristan's.

But there is not a single element of the heroic in Brangäne. She is, if anything, a coward, or

at least a temporizer. The makeshift of the moment is what appears most desirable to her. Her naïve mind, which was so astonished to learn that the Tantris she helped to nurse was the Tristan she had just addressed, could project itself into the future no further than the next quarter of an hour. If that chanced to be a bad one, no matter. Those which were to follow were all blank for the good Brangäne.

So must it be, for in all versions of the story except that mysterious one which Scribe unearthed for use in Auber's "Le Philtre," and which reappears in the first act of Donizetti's "L'Elisir d'Amore," the potion is taken by the two lovers unwittingly. It is administered by mistake. Wagner has accentuated his meaning as to the character of Brangäne by modifying this feature of the legend. His Brangäne does not give the love potion by mere mistake, but in order to save her lady's life. To enact her as a heroic personage makes her exchange of the potions inexplicable. Yet Wagner did not wholly abandon the notion of a mistake, for Brangäne's error in preferring Isolde's dishonor to her death is surely a mistake of the direst kind.

In the poem of Gottfried von Strassbourg—here let us fall into the widening trail of the

historic exploration party — Brangäne does not give the potion at all. Neither is she a maid. She is a lady of high position at the court of Isolde's mother and in the confidence of the Queen. This Queen is a magician and gives the love potion to Brangäne to administer to Isolde and King Mark as soon as they are wed. On the voyage, Tristan, desiring wine, calls for it, and a maid attending the Princess brings to him the phial containing the potion. It looks like wine, and neither Tristan nor the maid suspects that it is anything else. Isolde, too, knows naught of it. Then, says Gottfried: —

"To Tristan first she passed the same:
He gave it to the royal dame.
Thereof she drank reluctantly,
Gave it to him, and then drank he;
That wine it was they both believed.
Then came Brangäne, who perceived
And recognized at once the glass;
She well saw what had come to pass.
Thereon she felt such dire dismay
That all her strength was giving way,
And she appeared as are the dead;
Her heart was filled with mortal dread.
She seized the baleful glass she knew,
And bore it hence away and threw
It in the wildly raging sea.
'Oh, woe!' she spoke, 'Oh, woe is me,
That in this world I e'er was born,
I wretched one! Now I am shorn

Of troth and honor which were mine.
Have pity on me, Lord divine;
Oh, that I came unto this shore
And death took me not hence before—
That with Isold my lot was e'er
This fatal enterprise to share!
Oh, woe, Isold! Woe, Tristan, too!
This draught is death to both of you.'"

This Brangäne afterward explains to these two sudden lovers what has happened to them, and reiterates that the draught will be their death. Tristan declares that he will die happy possessing Isolde's love. But it is unnecessary to pursue the original legend further. Enough has been given to show that the Brangäne of Gottfried is not the Brangäne of Wagner.

Again we meet with one of those effective modifications of the old stories which Wagner made in his dramas. The splendid figure of the Queen mother's confidante bewailing her momentary unwatchfulness and her loss of honor, ready for the sake of that betrayal of confidence to give up her now wretched life, is a vastly different creature from the Brangäne of Wagner, who administers the potion as the shortest way out of an impending trouble.

Again, remember that this deed is one of pure unthinking devotion to the mistress. The fatal drink is the visible embodiment of fate. Appear-

ing as it does in inanimate form, it needs an agent to convey it to the four lips of the lovers. That agent is found in the foolish, doting maid. Is it not a purely Wagnerian touch?

Even Swinburne, poet of far higher fancy than Wagner, did not think of such a plan. He improves on the old legend by making Isolde herself administer the potion in error: —

"Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain,
Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,
Being tender natured; so with hushed light feet
Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet
Pitying her pain; so sweet a spirited thing
She was, and daughter of a kindly king.
And spying what strange bright secret charge was kept
Fair in that maid's white bosom while she slept,
She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled,
Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child
That hears of glad, sad life in magic lands;
And bear it back to Tristram with pure hands
Holding the love draught that should be for flame
To burn out of them fear and faith and shame."

Iseult speaks merrily of the wile of Brangwain in concealing this, the best wine of the feast. Then they drink, and the world is made anew. Here again the agency for the supply of the potion is error. Wagner could not have built his tragedy on such mighty lines if he had left that thought out. His Tristan and Isolde were standing on the brink of a volcanic crater; some-

thing was needed to impel them into it. That something was found in the foolish love of the simple-minded Brangäne.

The first act of Wagner's tragedy tells all that is to be told of the serving-woman. She stands disclosed at the very outset as a sublimated comprimaria. She is the titanic Alice to this mighty Lucia, marching to her marriage with one man when she loves another. To this Alice this Lucia tells how she learned to love in days now buried in the sweet and unforgotten past. The comprimaria of the old Italian opera walked about with the prima donna and gave her cues. This new comprimaria follows the same lines, but in how different a manner! Wagner was indeed the regenerator of the lyric drama. Verdi knew it. His Emilia would have been an old-fashioned comprimaria had he written "Otello" in his "Traviata" days.

First, this maid, alarmed at Isolde's passionate prayer that the ship and all in it may be destroyed ere they reach Mark's land, asks what has caused her mistress to be so downcast throughout the voyage. Then she is amazed to learn that Tantris is Tristan, and that her mistress does not wish to be led by him to the couch of Mark. She even offers some cheap, prosaic, and senseless worldly counsel. "If Tristan is

under any obligation to you, how can he discharge it better than by making you Mark's queen? Even if he himself did the wooing for his uncle, why should you object? He's a gentleman of rank and reputation." This innocent maid does not even catch the tragic meaning of Isolde's

> "Ungeminnt
> Den hehrsten Mann
> Stets mir nah' zu sehen —
> Wie konnt' ich die Qual bestehen?"

"Unloved by the lordliest man, yet always near him, how could I bear that anguish?" This "heroic" Brangäne applies this speech to King Mark and reminds Isolde of the casket of enchanted drinks provided by her mother. When Isolde proclaims that the drink of death is that which she will use, the situation is entirely beyond the comprehension of the maid. She cries: "The drink, for whom? Tristan? Oh, horror!"

The score is significantly barren of explicit stage directions about the substitution of the potion of love for that of death. But there is no question as to what ought to be done. Wagner on more than one occasion fell into the error of leaving too much to the imagination of the public. It is absolutely essential to the understanding of

"Tristan und Isolde" by an audience that Brangäne should with the greatest possible clearness exhibit the exchange of the drinks. She should show convincingly, by facial expression and gesture, the sudden formation of the idea of the substitution, and she should be particular to force the act of exchange upon the attention of the audience. Otherwise the subsequent actions of the two lovers are inexplicable to many, for the common experience of the theatre teaches that the points of a drama must be not merely indicated, but driven home; and the whole tragedy of "Tristan und Isolde" rests upon the love potion.

The potion once swallowed, Brangäne, who, "confused and shuddering," has been leaning over the ship's rail, turns and bursts out with a cry: "Woe, woe! Unpreventable endless trouble instead of brief death!"

This wise and heroic Brangäne, seeing the bride of Mark in the arms of Tristan, and knowing that they are the victims of her temporizing policy, bewails what she has done and suddenly discovers that death would have been better. The English translations do not bring this passage out clearly, yet it is of vital importance in explaining the character of Isolde's maid.

In the second act Brangäne is shown to us

the victim of her own ceaseless terrors. Day and night she cowers under the shadow of the impending axe. Her mind being stimulated by her fears for her mistress and her own remorse, she plays the spy and tracks the traitor Melot to his lair.

But all in vain. The barriers are burned away. The blood of Isolde is become as lava in her veins. She knows naught in all the world but the mad delirium of passion. Isolde will extinguish the torch. Brangäne pleads, and cries: "Oh that I had not once been faithless and false to my mistress's will! If I had only remained dumb and blind, *thy* work had been death! Now, as it is, thy shame, thy most shameful trouble, *my* work, — thus must I, blameworthy, know it."

Not very heroic that! Brangäne wishes she had kept out of the whole affair. Then the death of Tristan and Isolde would have been the latter's act. Now this poor maid feels that her policy of temporizing has caused all the trouble and brought her beloved mistress into a shameful position. That is practically all of Brangäne.

One little speech in the third act shows that she is still reproaching herself for her weakness. She has gone to the King and atoned for her "blind guilt," as she calls it, by explaining to

him the cause of the loss of honor by Tristan and Isolde.

In the entire text of Wagner there is nothing to indicate that he intended Brangäne to be regarded as anything but a simple-minded serving-woman, deeply attached to her mistress, acting in the matter of the potions on a blind and instantaneous impulse to save her mistress from death and murder. She is naïve in thought, superficial in reasoning, straightforward in emotion, and altogether transparent as crystal. Kurvenal's devotion to Tristan is essentially a masculine devotion, ready to face death, deploring dishonor, but not forsaking even in the face of shame. Kurvenal serves with heart and life. Brangäne serves with heart and subterfuge.

A vast amount of ill-informed feminine twitter is accepted as learned comment on such characters as Brangäne. All that is necessary to a full understanding of this or any other Wagnerian personage is a careful examination of the text and music. The text should always be the original German, for the libretto translators have played havoc with it. Brangäne's most significant wail, "Unpreventable endless trouble instead of quick death," is usually translated in a misleading manner.

RICHARD STRAUSS

I. THE HISTORICAL SURVEY

Theorbos, violins, French horns, guitars,
Leave in my wounded ears inflicted scars.
CHARLES LAMB to *Clara N.*

FOR some seasons the orchestral compositions of Richard Strauss have been the exciting features of the leading orchestral concerts. They have fairly set the musical *cognoscenti* by the ears. The strenuous German artist is yet a young man, and what he may achieve in an uncertain future is a fruitful subject for critical speculation. What he has already done is to stir up the musical world as it has not been stirred since Richard Wagner proclaimed his regenerative theories of the musical drama. Strauss has turned the technic of orchestral composition topsy-turvy, and has made orchestras sing new songs. He has in certain ways discredited Beethoven and the prophets, and has shrunk the orchestral wonders of Berlioz and Wagner to the dimensions of a Sunday afternoon band concert. He has caused the critical

heathen to rage and the long-haired people to imagine vain things. In fine, the simple question now frankly discussed in the sacred circles of the inner brotherhood is just this: "Is Richard Strauss a heaven-born genius, or is he merely crazy?"

Usually when musical composers have ventured out of the beaten path, just found by the critics after much thorny wandering through the jungle of error, the cry has been that they were going astray. The poor critics have never been able to understand how any genius could depart from the beaten path without being lost in the woods, as they themselves generally are. In nine cases out of ten the composer who does so depart is lost, and hence the critic's calling is not altogether one of sorrow. The prophet who has ninety per cent of "I told you so" in his retrospective views is not wholly a subject for commiseration. But there is that tenth man, who is always an explorer, and who always sets to cutting new paths through the forest. The critic says, "You 're going to get lost," and he replies, "I may lose you, but not myself." After a time he comes out of the forest into a new and beautiful land, and the critic, limping slowly and painfully after him, murmurs, "You were right; it is good for us to be here."

And so the music critics, who long ago reduced their comments on Beethoven and Weber and Schubert and Schumann to an exact science, and who have made it possible for any old reader to predict precisely what will be said on the morning after a purely classical concert, have fallen over the music of Strauss into a confusion like unto that of the army of Pharaoh suddenly overtaken by the waters of the Red Sea. It was about twelve years ago that this music began to echo through the concert-rooms of America. Strauss had begun to write early in life, but his first works were imitative of the older masters. The real Richard Strauss began to reveal himself in 1887, when he produced "Macbeth," the first of his series of symphonic poems. The others are Don Juan (1888), Death and Apotheosis (1889), Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks (1895), Thus Spake Zarathustra (1896), Don Quixote (1897), and A Hero's Life (1898). The "Symphonia Domestica," which is really a tone poem, was produced at Carnegie Hall, New York, March 21, 1904.

What has Strauss done in these works to "so get the start of the majestic world"? He has asked us to listen to orchestral compositions made with wide deviations from the established outlines, with a new melodic idiom, with a har-

mony which frequently affects the ear precisely as lemon juice affects the palate, with instrumental combinations of overpowering sonority and harshness, and, above all, with attempts at a detailed definiteness of expression which demand the closest application of the hearer's powers of analysis.

He has excited curiosity of the liveliest kind among those who hold that there is a real difference "'twixt tweedledum and tweedledee." To those who accept music, as they accept soup, as one of the conventional details of a polite existence, all this pother about Strauss must seem unnecessary, yet since it has come, they naturally desire to know what it is all about. They must, then, begin by recognizing the fact that the modern orchestra has developed from a collection of ill-assorted and misunderstood instruments into a single instrument, the most eloquent at the disposal of the composer. It is majestic in power, royal in dignity, brilliant in gayety, convulsing in sport, inspiring in appeal, melting in supplication. Its variety of tonal shades is exhaustless. Its scale ranges from the profoundest bass to the acutest treble. Its dynamic power modulates from the faintest whisper of a pianissimo to the thunderous crash of a fortissimo. It sings, it laughs, it

weeps, it woos, it storms, it hymns, it meditates, — all at the command of the composer who knows how to utilize its powers.

Yet it is still an imperfectly understood instrument. Remember always that music is the youngest of our modern arts. Remember, too, that although we can trace its beginnings back to the fourth century of the Christian era, we find that twelve hundred years were occupied with the development of a single form of music, — vocal polyphony, the form in which the mighty masterpieces of the Roman Church down to the day of Lasso and Palestrina were composed. The masters of this vocal polyphony were engaged in studying how they could compose for the liturgy of the church music in which several voice-parts, each singing a melody, could sound simultaneously and yet produce agreeable harmonies. The discovery of the principles underlying this method was made slowly, yet it was essential that this discovery should be made. Without it musical art could not advance, for the laws of counterpoint and harmony are the first principles of musical art.

Toward the close of the sixteenth century a change came over the spirit of music. The mass of the Roman Church had become so complicated and ornate in its style of composi-

tion that the congregations did not know what words of the liturgy were sung. The revival of Greek learning in Italy brought with it the study of the Greek Testament in the original, and this study revealed the defects of the Vulgate used by the church. A blow at Latin was a blow at the authority of the church, and the questionings aroused by the revelations of the Greek Testament touched the mass, and made the people desirous of hearing the text and knowing what it was about. Such a demand called for a simplification of musical style. This demand was strengthened by the invention of printing. The people began to get books and to read, and that led them to think and inquire. Furthermore the chaste beauty of Greek art had become known, and its influence promoted the simplification of musical style in the church. The broad and dignified hymns employed by the great reformer, Martin Luther, were another powerful argument in favor of simpler music in the sanctuary. The church was not blind to the signs of the time, and its composers made some efforts toward clarifying their style.

The revival of Greek learning led also to an attempt to resuscitate the dead Greek drama, or rather to reconstruct the Italian play on its

lines. The fact that the Greeks had chanted rather than declaimed their dramatic texts suggested to the little band of Italian enthusiasts led by Galilei, Peri, and Caccini, an attempt to reproduce this musical delivery. Their efforts resulted in the invention of dramatic recitative and the birth of opera. With the advent of this form of vocal art the supremacy of church polyphony was overthrown. It did not cease to exist, but it lost its dominion over the musical world, and it almost stopped developing. To this day the works of Palestrina composed in the second half of the sixteenth century remain the model and the despair of church composers. Handel and Bach, introducing more modern harmonies and employing the resources of the orchestra, which Palestrina and his predecessors never used, carried vocal polyphony a little further, but their advance was external rather than fundamental.

It was at this stage of musical progress that the orchestra made its appearance, — a feeble, tottering, purposeless instrumental infant. Collections of instruments had of course existed. Millionaires of the Middle Ages drowned the inanities of their dinner conversation with banquet music, just as the moderns do. But their assemblies of instruments were merely fortui-

tous. Any instruments which chanced to be in the house, and for which there were players, were utilized. There was no music specially written for these orchestras. We may suppose that they played the popular tunes of the day. When the opera came into existence, some sort of orchestra had to be extemporized. Here again in the beginning any instruments easily accessible seem to have been taken up. It was not till Claudio Monteverde began his experiments in instrumental combinations in his operas in the early part of the seventeenth century that anything like method in instrumentation was discernible.

Monteverde began the exploration of the resources of each instrument in characteristic expression. He endeavored to measure the powers of the viol, the trumpet, the organ, and certain combinations of instruments as illustrators of dramatic action. He invented some of the now familiar tricks of orchestration, such as the tremolo and the pizzicato. Furthermore he created an instrumental figure to imitate the galloping of horses and another to depict the struggle of a combat, and thus was really the artistic progenitor of Richard Strauss, with his battle dins and his pirouetting maids. Succeeding composers were not slow to fol-

low the suggestions offered by the work of Monteverde. The opera became a field for instrumental experiment, and the orchestra, as employed by the operatic composers, was continually in advance of the symphonic orchestra in the variety and extent of its combinations and in the utilization of the special powers of each individual instrument. This continued to be the case up to the time of Liszt, Berlioz, and Wagner, when the technics of conventional orchestration were so thoroughly established that the demands of the new romantic school of composers affected the orchestra simultaneously in opera and symphonic composition.

That the operatic orchestra should have taken the lead was perfectly natural. When vocal polyphony was deposed from its supremacy, instrumental music was in its infancy. Only the organ had achieved anything approaching independence, and that was because all the leading composers had been writing for the church and knew the church instrument. For practice at home they used the clavichord, one of the forerunners of the piano, and they began presently to compose special music for it, but in the style of their organ music. Gradually they fell into the way of writing for small groups of instruments, and after a time the orchestra

found its way from the opera house to the church, and the orchestrally accompanied mass came into existence. But meanwhile the composers who wrote for the clavier, with the aid of those who wrote for the solo violin, were fashioning a form, and after a time the sonata began to assume a definite shape. Now it was borne in upon composers that their auditors would not arrive at the opera in time to hear the overture, for operatic publics were much the same then as they are now; and the poor composers had recourse to writing their overtures so that they could be played independently and having them performed at concerts. As these overtures were written in a form founded upon the principles of the sonata form, nothing was more natural than that gradually composers should be led to the composition of complete sonatas for orchestra, and a sonata for orchestra is a symphony.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, then, after Sebastian Bach had carried the piano solo through the splendors of his "Well Tempered Clavichord," and the piano sonata had attained something like defined shape, we see Stammitz, Gossec, and, at length, Haydn producing thin, tentative weakly orchestrated sonatas for orchestra, and the real development of independ-

ent orchestral composition began. This was nearly a century and a half after the birth of the orchestra as an adjunct to the opera, and the same length of time after the beginning of independent composition for the clavichord. In other words, although the modern art of music may fairly be said to have begun at least as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, when the fundamental principles of counterpoint were enunciated by the French masters, the most splendid and powerful of all musical instruments, the orchestra, is to-day in its infancy. For if the masters of vocal polyphony took some twelve centuries to elaborate their science, it is fair to presume that, even though the general laws of music are now firmly established, the technics of the orchestra and of orchestral composition, which are a little over a hundred years old, are yet by no means fully understood.

The method of composition employed by the early masters of orchestral music was elaborate, yet not recondite. It was a system of architecture in tones, and its achievements were distinctly satisfying to the æsthetic discernment and to the appetite of the human mind for a logical arrangement of ideas. Four parts or movements were allotted to a symphonic work. Contrast of time, rhythm, key, and harmonic color was sought.

Each movement differed from that next to it. Variety in unity was the ultimate object. But each movement had to have a well-defined shape within itself. Two melodic ideas, complementary to each other in key, rhythmic nature, and sentiment, were invented. They were held up for the inspection of the hearer at the beginning of the movement. Then the composer embarked upon what was called the "working out." He took the essential features of his two melodies and juggled them through the tricks of musical metamorphosis. He dressed them in new harmonies; he made them writhe in the embraces of counterpoint; he expanded them into new melodies; he sang them with the different voices of the instrumental body. In the end he repeated them in their original shape, and brought his movement to a close. The entire purpose was the treatment of themes. The only aim was to make symmetrical, intelligible, interesting music.

In evolving this form the composers fell, as I have said, into a conventional use of their orchestra. They had three choirs, one of wooden wind instruments, one of brass, and one of strings played with bows. They allotted fixed functions to each choir and to the members of each, and there they stopped. Occasionally a hint from

the operatic treatment of the instruments enlightened them and they made a slight advance, but nevertheless, when Beethoven came to write his symphonies, in which he attempted to make orchestral music attain something more than mere musical beauty, he found himself hampered by the conventionalities of symphonic orchestration, as well as by those of the symphonic form. It was the limitation of the form, indeed, which restrained the instrumentation. The form itself had first reached definiteness with Haydn, who died when Beethoven was thirty-nine. Only in his later years did Haydn learn the use of clarinets, the most important members of the wood wind choir.

Beethoven, striving to make the symphony a vehicle for emotional expression, was compelled to busy himself with changes in the form, and he gave no special study to instrumental effects. He used such new ones as readily suggested themselves to him, but they were nothing more than elaborations of the old conventions. However, the seed sown by Beethoven speedily bloomed in the growth of the new romantic school. The principal tenet of this school was that music must express emotions, and that the form must develop entirely from the emotional purpose and plan of the work. Two distin-

guished explorers of this new style devoted their highest efforts to the production of orchestral composition.

Liszt endeavored to tell stories in music by erasing the dividing line between movements and writing his work all in one piece. He retained the two contrasting themes of the old symphonists, but he asked his hearers to affix a meaning to each of them. Then he proceeded to handle them in much the same way as the symphonists did, working them out, and varying them with much skill, though always with a view to suggesting the development of the incidents of his story. To such a purpose the resources of orchestral color lent mighty aid, and Liszt was not slow to perceive this. He began to draw away from the conventions of the symphonists, and to seek for new and striking instrumental combinations. Nevertheless in his compositions for orchestra Liszt was the debtor of two men much more remarkable than himself, namely, Wagner and Berlioz. From the former he got the idea of the use of themes with definite meanings attached to them. From the latter he obtained the suggestion of the employment of the orchestra to tell stories and much information as to its technics. Berlioz, however, continued the use of separate movements,

and his attempts to use definitely representative themes were few and uncertain. He preceded Wagner, nevertheless, in the revelation of the resources of the orchestra, and he antedated Liszt in the use of the orchestra for romantic composition.

Later imitators of Berlioz and Liszt failed to perceive anything except the vast color schemes of their orchestration. Borrowing a few of the conventional figures of the older writers, such as Haydn's sea waves and Beethoven's thunderstorms, they asked us to see things through a kaleidoscope of instrumental color. They forgot that we could not understand them when they made no logical appeal to our intelligence.

Richard Strauss, standing upon the vantage ground made for him by Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, has evidently tried to carry the direct expression of the orchestra to a higher plane by utilizing the best elements of their work. He has sought to make the orchestra tell stories, but he has not made the error of supposing that he could ignore the fundamental principles of musical form which constituted the ground plan of the old symphony. He has utilized themes with definite meanings attached to them, as Wagner did, without confining himself to two, as the older writers did, and as Liszt did in most

of his works. He has returned in his later compositions to the fashion of clearly separated movements, while he has made them pass before the hearer without pauses between any two of them. He has developed his themes according to the principles laid down by the symphonic masters, and has striven to enforce their meaning with all the effects of orchestral color. And withal he has endeavored to compose only music with a purpose, never music for its own sake. In short, Strauss has shown that the principles of musical form which the earlier writers painfully evolved out of their attempts to produce nothing beyond musical beauty, not only can be, but must be, utilized by the composer who cares nothing whatever about musical beauty, and who aims only at making music a means of expression.

This I believe to be Strauss's greatest and most significant achievement. It is the legacy which he will leave to his successors, and which will influence the progress of musical development. His handling of the orchestra itself is a natural outgrowth of the researches of Berlioz and Wagner. The former left little to be learned about the capacity of each individual instrument; the latter developed to an extraordinary degree the employment of many voice-parts and the use

of striking combinations. The early writers, for example, used violins always in two parts, whereas Wagner divided them sometimes into as many as fifteen. Flutes, oboes, and clarinets were used by the classic masters in pairs; Wagner began to employ them by threes. Strauss uses three or four of each. He makes his orchestra sing in many parts, and he keeps the various voices weaving and interweaving in marvellously learned counterpoint. When he wants a great climax of sound, he gets one that is overwhelming. Furthermore, he habitually introduces solo voices among the mass of tone. He individualizes his instruments, and in some compositions fairly casts them for definite dramatic impersonations. Musicians will understand me when I add that he has asked every orchestral player to be a virtuoso. He writes formidably difficult passages for horns, for trombones, for oboes. He makes no concessions to the technical difficulties of the instruments, as the older writers did. He treats the instruments, as Wagner treated human voices, simply as means of expression. The players must master the difficulties.

The critical quarrel with Strauss is based upon three grounds: first, that he endeavors to make music tell a complete story; second, that he seeks materials which are unsuited to musical

embodiment; and, third, that he writes ugly music. Composers have yielded to the temptations of their fancies since the earliest days. Away back in the fifteenth century, Jannequin tried to describe The Cries of Paris in four-part vocal polyphony. Later composers fashioned piano pieces which were supposed to tell whole histories. Ambros, the distinguished German historian of music, felt it incumbent on him to write a book to show where the communicative power of music ended and the aid of text must be called in. Wagner declared that music unassisted could go no further than Beethoven's symphonies, and that the last movement of the Ninth Symphony was a confession of that fact.

It was long ago conceded that music could depict the broader emotions. It has generally been denied that it could go into details or explain to the hearer the causes of the feelings which it expressed. Yet by the judicious use of titles and the establishment of a connection between a composition and some well-known drama or poem, the imagination of the hearer is stimulated to conceive the meaning of many details otherwise incomprehensible. Strauss goes the furthest in the elaboration of detail. He uses numerous themes, each a guiding motive in the Wagnerian sense, and he asks us to follow them

through a myriad of musical workings out, all having direct significance in telling a story. The stories are not without unpleasant incidents and the music is rasping in its ugliness at times. But this is not for us to judge. What is said of the music of Strauss now was said twenty-five years ago of Wagner's. But a few years, and the acidulated croakings of the singer of Munich may be as sweet upon our ears as now are the endless melodic weavings of "Tristan und Isolde."

Of the ideas which lie behind the music of Strauss less can be said in opposition now than could be said five years ago. Then we knew Strauss as the writer of "Don Juan," an attempt to put into music the sensuality of a libertine, his final satiety, his utter coldness of heart; of "Death and Apotheosis," a weird endeavor to portray with an orchestra the horrors of dissolution, the gasps, the struggles, the death-rattle, the *tremor mortis;* "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," a study in musical depiction of wandering vulgarity, of jocular obscenity, a vast and coruscating jumble of instrumental cackles about things unfit to be mentioned. We felt that the nineteenth century was closing with something like midsummer madness in art. With Ibsens, Maeterlincks, and Strausses plucking like soulless

ghouls upon the snapping heart-strings of humanity, treating the heart as a monochord for the scientific measurement of intervals of pain, and finally poking with their skeleton fingers in the ashes of the tomb to see if they could not find a single smouldering ember of human agony, we had attained a rare state of morbidity in art. We felt that when Art had turned for her inspiration to the asylum, the brothel, and the pesthouse, it was time for a new renaissance. Strauss was our musical Maeterlinck, our tonal Ibsen. Vague, indefinable fancies, grotesque and monstrous mysticisms, gaunt shapes and shapeless horrors, seemed to be his substitutes for clean, strong, pure ideals; and when he set to music Friedrich Nietzsche's "Thus Spake Zarathustra," the philosophy of the solution of "world riddles," we thought he had utterly gone mad. For in this work we found the highest skill in the development and polyphonic treatment of leading motives devoted to an attempt to make music lecture on metaphysics, when all the time it was perfectly obvious that without reading Nietzsche's book no one could have any notion of the composer's intent. The mastery of orchestration and of the technics of composition shown in this work convinced thoughtful critics that Strauss was not to be sniffed out of consideration.

Here was a force to be reckoned with in musical progress, even though it was mistakenly wielded.

With the introduction of "A Hero's Life," Strauss seemed suddenly to have entered upon cleaner vision. To this day I am lost in wonder at the vast and appalling ugliness of some parts of the composition, but I know that custom will make dear to us musical idioms which now excite our antipathy. That is an old story. Artusi of Bologna said that Monteverde had lost sight of the true purpose of music, — to give pleasure. A similar accusation was once brought against the mellifluous and tactful Rossini. It was shouted through Europe against Wagner. We may use it against Strauss, but if we do, we must chance the ridicule of the hereafter. "A Hero's Life," despite its frequent attempts to make music speak more definitely than music can, is based on broad moods which are suitable for musical exposition. Wild, chaotic, discordant as many of the passages of this remarkable work certainly seem to us now, there is no denying the extraordinary mastership shown in its thematic development. The Wagnerian method of modifying themes in rhythm and harmony so as to alter their dramatic significance is combined successfully with the methods of the classicists in working out. Modern polyphony, the polyphony of

hazardous cross paths in acrid harmony, of the impinging contrapuntal curves, is handled with consummate ease. It is orchestral technic of the highest kind, but it all aims at making music which shall describe the minutest feelings, the finest shades of thought, and the most varied actions of personages whom the hearer must see with his mind's eye.

It aims at a wider and more detailed expression than the repulsive "Don Juan" and the vulgar "Till Eulenspiegel," but it is clean and wholesome in tone, and most of its material is safe from the charge of unfitness for publication. It is not impossible to conceive of Strauss after producing this work as looking back over his entire orchestral product and addressing us in the words of the inscrutable McIntosh Jellaludin: "Some of it must go; the public are fools and prudish fools. I was their servant once. But do your mangling gently — very gently. It is a great work, and I have paid for it in seven years' damnation."

It is too soon for us to say that Strauss will influence the future. He may leave us nothing but certain purely mechanical improvements in orchestral technics. Even these will have their value. Yet all recent attempts at progress in music have been in the direction of more defi-

nite expression, and Strauss may be only a stepping-stone in an advance toward that blissful epoch whose hearers will display as much imagination as its composers, that transcendent condition in which genius understands genius. As in that faculty-free heaven celebrated in undergraduate song, no musical critics will be there. Every man will be his own critic. The millennium will have come.

II. — THE ÆSTHETIC VIEW

Denique sit quidvis, simplex duntaxat et unum.
HORACE, *Ars Poetica.*

MR. STRAUSS has been acclaimed as an explorer, a pathfinder in the wilderness of new art. But after all he is simply a product, or perhaps it would be more exact to say a result; for the trend of musical art in the past century was toward representation.

But the attempts of the early composers were in the line of descriptive music, which is a species of mimetics. The transfer of peculiar sounds and characteristic sound-motions, as in the cases of whistling wind and undulating forest billows, to the musical canvas, is a simple and natural process. It pleases the most superficial mind by the translation of one art into terms of another. To "paint" in sounds, as the musicians term it, is a pretty and poetic fancy. It is like the poet's use of tone-speech to imitate qualities or motions. It is the onomatopoetic in music. Sometimes it is the paronymous.

We are all cultivated savages. The primeval hordes of Europe had their rude rhythms and

their inarticulate cries, which were as music to their ears. Significance was attached to these sounds wholly because of their external resemblance to something lying in a different plane of human experience. We have refined and extended the scale and have attuned our ears and our spirits to higher tones. We hear triads in stones, scales in running brooks, and chords of the diminished seventh in everything.

How long was it before the musicians ceased to content themselves with their tone pictures of ocean waves and murmuring streams? Surely, it was not long after Monteverde found the rhythmic and instrumental equivalents for the galloping of horses and the crashing together of gallant and knightly combatants that the dream of joy or woe, uttered in songs without words, entered the minds of composers. Monteverde's lament of Arianna showed that the plaint of a sorrowing heart might be most musical, most melancholy. Doubtless, as the indolent Venetian gondolier hummed the melody and forgot the words through the shining avenues of the island city, the thought came dimly to him, as it did clearly to the musician, that the tune was sad and saddening, even without the text.

But not till the time of Beethoven was a direct and explicit effort made to paint soul pictures in

wordless music. Beethoven was indeed the regenerator of instrumental art, in that he demonstrated with splendid and convincing power in his later symphonies that the classic sonata form could sing the weal and woe of humanity with eloquence as noble as that of the opera aria aided by the explanatory comment of its own verses.

Beethoven, however, contented himself with broad outlines. He sang passion, joy, grief, resolution, courage, force; but never did he essay to impart to his music the virtue of an explanation. The fifth symphony explains itself and it asks no aid from without. It does not lean back against a wall of text for its support.

The seventh symphony has been subjected to various processes of explanation, but it reads most clearly in its own light as a series of mood pictures. The ninth symphony goes further, and here Beethoven frankly confessed that in order to make his purpose clear he needed text. The construction of the last movement brings to the hearer in its opening measures a solution of the meaning of the three preceding movements. It is the Wagnerian device of prophesying with themes in the early part of a work, and furnishing the key when at length the theme is associated with text later in the composition.

There is no utterly new thing under the *cantus firmus.*

Beethoven's psychographics are general and not specific. He does not seek to chase the emotion to its source and to speculate upon its nature and origin. He is content to represent it in tone, to decorate it, if you will, with instrumental color, but there he stops. Shall we say that therefore Beethoven's psychometry was saner and more artistic than that of Strauss and his few brothers in art?

It is a question similar to that which arises in literature anent the comparative merits of Shakespeare and Ibsen. But here is a substantial difference. Shakespeare was unquestionably a mighty poet, and Ibsen is a prose dramatist pure and simple. Shakespeare was an idealist and Ibsen is the arch realist of the age. It is not just criticism to compare these two. You may compare Clyde Fitch with Sheridan or Augustus Thomas with Robertson, if you will, but it is no more honest to compare Ibsen with Shakespeare than it would be to compare him with Æschylus.

But when you come to music, you come to a different issue. Absolute music is an entity. It is a very special branch of an art which has varieties. The lied, for example, is an art form

by itself; so is the oratorio, and so again is the music drama of Wagner. It were foolish to try to compare the symphonies of Beethoven with the songs of Schubert and thence to decide which was the greater composer. The development of the symphonic branch of musical art is that in which Beethoven was most specially concerned, and it is to his successors in that field that we must look to study the outcome of his innovations.

When we trace the advance of symphonic art from Beethoven to Strauss, we find a steady and irresistible movement away from the representation of broad, fundamental soul states, from a strictly scientific method of musical psychostatics down to a condition in which the orchestra is transformed into a psychoscope, and the symphony is become a treatise on mental diseases and methods of conversing with the dead. Composers seem bent on pinning down to their artistic dissecting-tables the very essence of the soul itself.

The simple imitative method of the pristine descriptions in tone has become neurotic mimicry, and the melodic and harmonic idioms hint that the modern ear is suffering from acute myringomycrosis, a cheerful affliction caused by the growth of fungi on the ear drum. Fungi are

plentiful in damp and noisome places, and these seem to be the artistic haunts of the imaginations of the Ibscene realists in music.

This so-called "romantic" music of to-day owes a considerable debt to the Abbé Liszt, whose undertakings in the domain of art are overestimated by his adulators and undervalued by his detractors. But there is no practical denial of the fact that Liszt fashioned a system and set up a manner in his symphonic poem. Richard Strauss might have been possible without Liszt, but as matters stand we are bound to acknowledge the debt of the composer of "Don Juan" to the composer of "Tasso."

Yet how far beyond Liszt has the psychologic composition of to-day advanced? Liszt did undertake to make his music tell stories, and that is a thing which, with all deference to Liszt, music cannot do and never has done. You have to read Byron's "Mazeppa" to understand Liszt's, just as you have to read Bürger's "Lenore" if you wish to understand so naïve a story-teller as Raff's "Lenore" symphony. How much more necessary is it to read Maeterlinck's "Death of Tintagiles" in order to understand Charles Martin Loeffler? Not a bit.

But Liszt never dreamed of analyzing soul states and those mysterious conflicts of soul and

body which form the materials of psychomachy. He never sought to trace the origin of life nor the seat of the vital spark. The abbé was something of a mystic, too, but he knew he was not a genius. A very able dissimulator, a pious Mephistopheles, a Machiavellian master of musical arts, and the father of Cosima Wagner, he exploited his external impositions with consummate skill; and when he sat down to compose, he swore fealty to the highest ideals with all the sincerity of Iago swearing vengeance at the side of the kneeling Othello.

He sent forth into the easy world his purple and yellow masterpieces, and the world called them royal. A little drawing and a great deal of color was what he offered, and the public saw in his splotches of sound Turneresque mystery and mastery. The dear public still loves these works, and will probably continue to do so for many years. And in one respect the public is right. Liszt never tried to be too definite. He left something to the imagination, and when the public has not any imagination, it imagines that it has, and that it is discerning things in Liszt's works which Liszt himself never discovered.

Camille Saint-Saëns of France is, in his boulevardian way, a follower of Liszt. He also has

written symphonic poems and he has been wise enough not to go to the uttermost limits of detailed expression. His Hercules is a gentleman and his Omphale dwelt not far from the Rue de Berlin. Hercules went to see her in a Paris cab — you can hear the cocher swear. Omphale dressed him in a Paquin gown and dealt him exquisite love-taps with his rosewood opera cane.

Dainty Hercules of the Boulevard des Italiens and seductive Omphale of the Rue de Berlin! Ye are the Watteau pictures of a would-be pastoral, the mincing marionettes of a cigarette smoker's dream. Between such gentle figures as you and the chortling barbarians of the Strauss phantasy there is the vast and impassable gulf of fetid inspiration which separates Alexander Pope from Rabelais. Though he paint Phaeton swinging wide the chariot of the sun through the affrighted heavens and plunging headlong into Eridanus, or Death strumming the "zig et zig et zag sur son violon," Saint-Saëns is always a gentleman, the Mendelssohn of romantic orchestration.

But the symphonic poem is not confined to Liszt and Saint-Saëns. It has spread itself through all Europe and has inoculated the symphony. Poor Rubinstein! When he wrote

his "Ocean" symphony, he held himself within the limits of the art of composition as formulated by Beethoven in his fifth and seventh symphonies. He painted broad mood pictures. He imitated motions as frankly as Haydn. He was elementary, even at times elemental. At any rate, he was sane. He respected the boundaries that lie, as Ambros has shown us, between music and poetry, and did not call upon the tone art to write treatises and handbooks. He strove to induce music to sing the might and majesty of the ocean, but he did not ask it to find the latitude and longitude.

Other masters have struggled to make the symphony more definite in its tale-telling, but till to-day it has succeeded in keeping its place as the epitome of general emotional states. Tschaikowsky — most vigorous, if not most subtle, of all recent masters, bursting with savage passions, flaming with wild northern fancies — wrote into the symphony the representation of all human sufferings, the yearnings and grim revel, the madness and despair of Russia. But he clung to the deep-laid emotional scheme.

In his overtures he has gone not a whit further than Beethoven did in the "Leonore" No. 3. Tschaikowsky's "Hamlet," his "Romeo and Juliet," are mood pictures, perfectly compre-

hensible to all who know the dramas. They class with such works as Goldmark's "Sakuntala" and "Prometheus." Of these latter how clear and convincing is the second with its voices of sea nymphs, its solitude of the ocean, its mad effort of the man, and its lightning blast of Jove.

True, you must know Æschylus, and therein lies the weakness of all this kind of music, its temptation and its danger. If we may go so far, how are we to be estopped from prying further into the mysteries of musical depiction?

How this field has tempted the Frenchmen, and how little they have found in it! After all, Saint-Saëns is not so bad. Think of the intricate platitudes, the prolix prosiness and lofty emptiness of Bruneau's "Penthesilée" and "La Belle aux Bois Dormant" (poèmes symphoniques au sérieux, mes amis), while Godard, Joncières, Paladilhe, and others have dipped respectfully into the romantic *potage* and barely soiled their fingers. But all have striven to paint in tones, and have at any rate gone as far as sketching in detail.

Possibly the time will come when music will be a universal language. Certain cadences will be accepted in China, in Sussex, or in New Jersey, as signifying such and such emotions or

ideas, and certain resolutions of suspensions will have a meaning current in St. Petersburg, Vienna, and Cincinnati. But that time has not yet come, and the programme note is still an essential accessory either before or after the offence of the intimate symphonic poem.

The composers, while acknowledging this, continue to go forward along the path which they have chosen. Music is daily moving away from the broad mood pictures of Beethoven toward some form in which every phrase shall have its part and place in the exposition of soul secrets. The Frenchmen have made but little success, as we have seen, for they have treated their composition, not as literary music, but as literature itself.

If the work of Richard Strauss has any permanent significance at all, it is that the æsthetic basis of the Liszt and Tschaikowsky compositions, the Goldmark overtures and the polished tone poems of the Frenchmen is false, and that every attempt to rear upon it a lasting art form must be futile. Here need be no discussion of the stupendous achievements of Strauss's orchestration, nor the astounding hideousness of his harmonic plan.

Who was it said recently that the good Mr. Loeffler of Boston thought music in a scale of

his own? The Loeffler scale — C, D, E, F sharp, G sharp, A sharp, C. How sharper than a serpent's tooth! Strauss thinks in a harmony of his own. A harmony? A cacophony. The clash of jarring discord is as honey on the palate of his ear. The tonic triad is not a stranger to him, but its devilish consonance of the major third is to his mind, as it was to the pious fancies of the mediæval fathers, the spirit of tonal evil, the seductive embodiment of sensual sweetness.

Listen to his eternal feminine. When she plays the virtuous Kundry to his Hero of the "Heldenleben" or the Venus to his nomadic "Eulenspiegel" Tannhäuser, she sings in the wickedly purring major mode. But when heroic virtue slaughters ink-stained critics or scales the battlements of jarring worlds and plants the standard of manhood on a minaret of the universe, then titanic visions are expressed in crashing collisions of minor seconds or in strangled sixths and desiccated elevenths. Trumpets bleat through their noses, and clarinets chuckle in staccato treble; trombones rattle in raucous gurgles, and bassoons snort in hoarse expirations.

But all this is superficial. This is the manner, not the matter of the Strauss music. How far can this master magician, this royal juggler with

resolutions and suspensions, this acrobat of the flying chord, go with his endeavor to make music say for him the things that the entire decadent literature of modern Europe has striven to put down in plain words? If Strauss means anything, he means that Beethoven and Schumann were but the avant couriers of a vast march of progress into the bowels of delineation, the vitals of psychic communication.

Liszt and Tschaikowsky and Goldmark postulated a false theory of orchestral art because they clearly defined limitations. They promulgated by their practice the doctrine that only the broader moods of story could be represented in music. Strauss preaches that when Beethoven depicted in his fifth symphony the struggle of a soul and for the finer illustration of his thought united the scherzo with the finale, he opened the gateway to indefinite progress, and swung wide a banner with the old device, "Facilis descensus Averno."

Suppose, however, that this paragraph in the artistic treatise of Strauss contains a germinal truth, does it of necessity follow that to advance along the opened path is to finish in the corruption and rank odor of the morgue? What has so got the start of the majestic art of music as to lead it to the grave? First of all, decadent

poetry and fiction. When music began to strive to make itself a representative art, it confronted itself with a choice of objects. Primarily it had human life and experience as found in the composer's own soul, and this was the noblest source of all. "Look into thine own heart and write," is excellent advice for a composer. Then it had literature, the conservation of the experience and observation of man from the literary point of view. With these two sources it had to rest content, for neither sculpture nor painting offered anything other than the composition of life translated into other terms. The musician would better paint the Laocoön from his own conception than from the conception of the sculptor. He would but make music and water of Raphael's Madonna if he studied her instead of the Mary of the Holy Writ.

How long did it take the musician to discover that the Virgin was not such inspiring musical material as Mary Magdalen? Just as long as it took him to learn that he could not make a great composition out of a steady flow of sweetness, that he must have a warring of elements in his work, and that there must be some melodic principle striving for victory and at the end emerging from temporary tonal chaos in a pæan of triumph. The temptation of St. Anthony

was better matter for the composer than the meditations of St. Augustine, and the fast of Christ in the wilderness was less alluring than the legend of Herodias and John the Baptist.

In other words, the modern musician has found his finest inspirations in that struggle of good with evil in the human soul which has inspired the works of the greatest modern dramatists. The only question that remained to be solved after this was, How far would the musician go? The dramatist and the poet ran morbid; the musician, seeking his inspiration in the records of human souls made in the terms of literature, followed the man of the pen into the slough of despond.

The morbid studies of such dramatists as Ibsen and Maeterlinck are the real key to the music of such a composer as Strauss. Yet let us not deny that the musician is less drastic in his methods than the literary men. Strauss has indeed written his "Don Juan" and his "Death and Apotheosis," but he has placed upon their pages some passages of marvellous beauty. It is a beauty of orchestral idiom, of instrumental development, rather than of melodic exfoliation. Strauss, when all is said and done, is not master of melodic invention, but he speaks a language which is all his own, and he rises at times to

a power of sonorous utterance which has not been equalled in these modern days except by Wagner.

In his "Heldenleben" he has written more clearly than in some of his earlier works, but when all is said, his chief concern seems to be the dissection of souls for the purpose of exposing the lurking spot of disease. He gives us psychonosology — the study of mental diseases — rather than psychostatics — the study of the permanent conditions of the soul — which Beethoven gave us.

Whether this be right or wrong, true or false art, is not for the present to decide. Certainly such music is not for the masses. It is not for those who persist in listening to tunes as tunes only and condemning as no music that music which aims at some sort of representation.

To condemn such music is to throw over the later works of Beethoven, the choicest products of Chopin and Schumann, and many another creation with which even the mere tune-lover would be loath to part. But when the broad principles of all art are applied to the soul searchings of Richard Strauss, questionings will arise. Is it art? Certainly not, by the law of Schopenhauer, which guided Wagner, — eternal ideas represented by means of prototypes.

This will hardly apply to Strauss's "Don Juan" or his "Till Eulenspiegel." Beauty has thus far been the acknowledged end of all art. Are these things beautiful? Is their æsthetic basis lofty and wholesome? Surely not. Yet old Horace was indisputably right. Life is short, and art is long. How many viewless ages yet shall run before the process be complete? Who are we, to make final conclusions and splutter our puny "Quod erat demonstrandum"? Let us wait.

For the fleeting present we must hang pendulous between two positive extremes. Strauss is a symphonic poet or a symphonic poetaster. He is a dreamer of grandly grotesque visions, a Cervantes, a Rabelais, if you will, or a mere opium-eater without the genius of a De Quincey. Something of the mystic phantasy of De Quincey certainly lurks in the brain of him who wrote "Tod und Verklärung," and out of the contrapuntal abyss of "Zarathustra" emerges at the last something like the stupendous finale of the "Dream-Fugue": —

"Then was completed the passion of the mighty fugue. The golden tubes of the organ, which had as yet but muttered at intervals, — gleaming among clouds and surges of incense, — threw up, as from fountains unfathomable, columns of heart-shattering music. Choir

and anti-choir were filling fast with unknown voices. Thou also, dying trumpeter, with thy love that was victorious and thy anguish that was finishing, didst enter the tumult; trumpet and echo — farewell love and farewell anguish — rang through the dreadful sanctus."

Or is it all, this music of Strauss, a monstrous joke, and does the man laugh in his sleeve at the troubled world? Is he not only a musical Rabelais, but also that malodorous jest of a Rabelaisian brain, Gargantua himself?

"One of his governesses told me that at the very sound of pints and flagons he would fall into an ecstasy, as if he were tasting the joys of Paradise; and upon consideration of this his divine complexion they would every morning, to cheer him, play with a knife upon the glasses, or the bottles with their stoppers, and on the pint pots with their lids; at the sound whereof he became gay, would leap for joy, and rock himself in the cradle, lolling with his head and monochordizing with his fingers."

Till Eulenspiegel, Gargantua of Germany, noisome, nasty, rollicking Till, with the whirligig scale of a yellow clarinet in his brain and the beer-house rhythm of a pint pot in his heart, a joke upon a joke, — was he, and not the posing *Held* of the "Heldenleben," the real Strauss?

III. — WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

We transfretate the Sequane at the dilucul and crepuscul; we deambulate by the compites and quadrives of the urb; we despumate the Latin verbocination; and like verysimilary amorabons, we captat the benevolence of the omnijugal, omniform and omnigenal feminine sex.

RABELAIS, *Pantagruel*, bk. ii. ch. vi.

IT matters little from what point we view the tendency of musical art as it is disclosed to our vision through its most potent manifestations. We are driven inward upon the central and all-important question, How far can music go in the direction of depicting things which lie outside itself? Is it to convert itself into a language, or shall it sink into a kind of rapt mysticism which shall be accepted in a vague way as a species of philosophic speculation?

Walter Pater in his essay on Coleridge says: "The true illustration of the speculative temper is not the Hindoo mystic, lost to sense, understanding, individuality, but one such as Goethe, to whom every moment of life brought its contribution of experimental individual knowledge; by whom no touch of the world of form, color, and passion was disregarded."

Herein lies a deep, pregnant suggestion. Pater knew little enough of the inner nature of music, but he was able to make some sensible deductions from his comprehension of art in the broader sense, and in another place in the volume just quoted ("Appreciations") he suggests the possibility that music might be the ideal of all art, "precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression."

Against such a summary of the nature of music the whole practice of composition to-day cries out. And at the same time it finds itself unsatisfied by such a standard of speculative thought as that set up by Mr. Pater. Music would perhaps profit highly by a faithful adherence to that law of continual regard to the suggestions of the "world of form, color, and passion." But the rapt vacancy of the Hindoo mystic woos and wins the favor of composers, for outwardly it has a philosophic appearance, and to philosophize in music seems now to be the highest desire of its masters.

It is useless to attempt to blind one's self to facts. The march of music from pure beauty of form and development of melodic ideas toward the representation of ideas not musical

in themselves has been going on, as we have seen, from the very beginning. But at the outset there was no endeavor to translate mental processes into musical terms. As far back as the middle of the fifteenth century the story of Susanna was told in unaccompanied choral music of purely contrapuntal pattern. But there was no subtlety in such music. The text set forth the narrative; the music was a mere framework. Jannequin wrote his "Cries of Paris" in a similar style, but his musical effects consisted of a few primitive imitations of externals.

Kuhnau's descriptive sonatas contain nothing confusing. They are cheerfully frank in their endeavor to paint externals. They do not probe either heart or brain. Not till the association of music with the drama in the opera of the Italians of 1600, do we find the tone art deliberately set to work to embody the inner life of man, and then feelings alone were set forth.

The effort to embody feelings in vocal music was intelligible and natural. Song borrowed its inflections from speech, and speech took them from inarticulate cries. Peri's notion of using a smooth movement and a narrow range of intervals for unimpassioned song was taken from the

instinctive practice of speech. We speak in two or three notes, and slowly and regularly when we are perfectly calm. When we become excited, our voices move through more intervals and the tempo is accelerated. In agitation the speech is in broken, spasmodic phrases; the voice rises and falls irregularly. In sadness the minor mode comes involuntarily into our tones, and in weeping we slide portamento through the chromatic scale.

When Gluck revived the method of Peri and worked it out elaborately, he struck the death-blow to classicism, but his conservation of the musical principle is to be found in his continued employment of the purely musical forms. It was not for Gluck, a sculpturesque composer, a worshipper of melodic line and curve, to enter into the new paradise of operatic tone-speech. He pruned the old tree of many useless limbs; he swept from it a mass of noisome fungi; but he sat peacefully under its shade and knew not that its trunk pointed slantwise away from the zenith.

Gluck faced the parting of the ways, but saw it not. With the young, ingenuous, unsophisticated, and absolutely musical symphony of Haydn staring him in the eyes, he failed to discover that its basic principles were not available

for the construction of an art form embodying his dramatic ideals. The cyclic form of the plain song was predominant in the thought of Gluck, and it misled him from his own chosen path.

Weber failed to become a writer of speculative music for the same reason. He utilized the Volkslied form in his operas, and thus kept music in her throne of rule over text. Yet the effort of these two men toward an intelligible expression of feeling in music was bound to affect the composers of purely instrumental works.

There is no question in any mind that music can express feeling, or, at any rate, arouse it. From the earliest time there has been music for the feast and music for the funeral. Joy and sorrow have spoken their hearts in the accents of song. Practice in the employment of the elements of musical expression was bound to make the utterance clearer, and when the rule of the ecclesiastic scales had been broken and the modern major and minor modes had come into their own, it was but another step to the complete inheritance of the chromatic world which Cyprian di Rore strove to open up as far back as 1544.

It was when Wagner threw over the entire apparatus of the cyclic form and the *lied* and

utilized to the utmost the resources of chromatic modulation, that music in the drama entered completely into the office of emotional expression. A new form was developed: that in which a set of melodic fragments, each with a definite significance, was woven into an instrumental ocean upon which the voice-parts floated like enchanted shallops. Wagner fairly fulfilled the Pater conception of the truly speculative artist, one "by whom no touch of the world of form, color, and passion was disregarded." Gluck treated poetry as a jewel, for which he as an artist was to provide the most chaste, beautiful, and appropriate setting. Wagner viewed poetry and music as two precious metals which he was to melt in the crucible of his genius into a new and more glorious product.

We stand to-day, in so far as opera is concerned, upon the ground cleared for us by Wagner. The Italians are striving to follow his lead, though they are instinctively and almost ineffectively endeavoring to preserve in their works that outward shape of vocal melody which is a clearly drawn national characteristic. Since Verdi's "Falstaff" nothing has been written which is of high import, for the calm contemplation of criticism cannot be deceived by the superficial cleverness of "Tosca," "La Bohème,"

and "Pagliacci," or the Mascagni turgidities. These works sparkle with the jewels of talent, but they never glow with the sunlight of genius. One act of Verdi's "Otello" or Boito's "Mefistofele" pales their reflected fires to the sickly yellow of a farthing rushlight.

But these writers are striving to advance beyond Wagner in the subtlety of the inner processes which they put into music. In all the Wagnerian drama there is no such purely modern product as the Scarpia of Puccini or the Osaka of Mascagni. Loge is elemental. He is a superhuman poetic creation, as well suited to the investiture of music as Milton's Lucifer. But setting Scarpia and Osaka to music is much like composing Joseph Chamberlain or Thomas Collier Platt.

The reaction of all this refinement of the means of expression in the musical drama upon instrumental music has led the song without words into a new country. The primitive descriptions of Kuhnau and Bach now make us smile. We have hunted the central secret to its lair. We have asked music to sing not only those broad moods of joy and sadness, peace and rage, which the imitation of the inflections of the voice in speech made possible for her in the very infancy of inarticulate song, but we

have demanded that she chase the intellectual concept to its source and embody reasonings and conclusions as if she were the handmaid of the inductive method.

So far have we gone that we can no longer blame those primitive thinkers who seek to fasten a story upon every composition. We find even so calm a commentator as Sir George Grove regretting that Beethoven did not prefix a descriptive title to the fifth symphony in order that we might discover his expressional purpose.

We have reached a situation which reduces music to a secondary position. She is no longer a proud and independent art, in which, as Mr. Pater notes, the substance and the form are one. The classic forms in which purely musical beauty was contained, in which the attempts at expression were confined to broad mood painting and the methods were always those of thematic development, are used by comparatively few composers. The title "symphony" is placed upon works which have few of the characteristics of the Beethoven model.

True, these works do not, because they cannot, abandon the fundamental principles of musical form. Even the tone poems of Richard Strauss are built in accordance with these inexorable laws. Architecture cannot do away with

walls and roofs and floors, nor the consideration of weight-sustaining power. But its outward presentations may and do travel far away from the manner of the Greeks.

Music no longer exists for herself. She seeks material always from without. Who writes now an "overture, scherzo, and finale"? Even Schumann, one of the pioneers of the modern romantic movement, did that; but our overfed imaginations require stimulation in the shape of titles. It must be an overture to an East Indian poem, which none of us ever read, or a symphonic fantasia on a Buddhistic doctrine, or a theme and variations setting forth the thoughts and actions of an allegorical character who was in himself a satire upon a generalization. In order that we may know what the composer is trying to tell us in the inarticulate language of the song without words, we must have a long and perplexing explanation by a learned pundit who constructs programme notes with the aid of a public library and a few Delphic hints from the composer himself. Then we must sit in the concert room gravely contemplating these notes while the orchestra is playing the music, and seriously endeavoring to delude ourselves into the belief that we can perform two mental processes at once, — namely, reading and grasping

the fulness of the programme explanation at the same time that we listen to and analyze the composition.

It seems about time for us to return to our Ambros and study his admirable book on the "Boundaries of Music and Poetry." Here is his just and convincing conclusion: "But in its ideal feature, music keeps within its natural boundaries so long as it does not undertake to go beyond its expressional capacity, — that is, so long as the poetical thought of the composer becomes intelligible from the moods called forth by his work and the train of ideas stimulated thereby, that is, from the composition itself; and so long as nothing foreign, not organically connected with the music itself, must be dragged in in order to assist comprehension."

How many of our ultra-refined orchestral studies in logic will stand examination in the searching light of that proclamation? Yet Ambros comes to that conclusion at the end of a volume written in answer to Hanslick's "The Beautiful in Music," of which the fundamental doctrine is that music has not expressional power at all. Ambros set out to show that it had, but that there was a point beyond which it could not go.

That point he found set clearly in view in the

symphonic works of Berlioz. He recounts the process of development of that master's "Romeo et Juliette" symphony. He compares it with Mendelssohn's "Meerestille und Glückliche Fahrt" overture, and notes that the title of the latter is an exact reproduction of Goethe's language. But "there is in the matter the great difference that this tonal work, even utterly apart from Goethe's poem, is in and through itself explicable and intelligible, and bears in itself its æsthetic centre of gravity and the conditions of its existence, whereas in the case of 'Romeo and Juliet' the centre of gravity lies outside the music, — that is to say, in the Shakespearian drama."

Mendelssohn, when he conceived his "Fingal's Cave" overture, embodied in a sentence the impeccable theory of correctly conceived programme music. He wrote to his sister that he could not describe such a thing, but he could play it. Having absorbed the mood of that landscape, he, being a musician, could reproduce it only in tones. Berlioz, on the other hand, sought not only to picture in his music the personalities and passions of the lovers, but he sought to reproduce in the form of a scherzo the poetic description of an imaginary conception, Queen Mab, put into the mouth of

a character created by Shakespeare! It was a long way round, was it not?

How great a difference is there between that process and Mr. Strauss's attempt to convey to us in music the conversation of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza or the anger of the knight at seeing the false Dulcinea? The centre of gravity is outside the music. So it is in "Ein Heldenleben," Strauss's strongest composition, and in his other tone poems. Tschaikowsky, on the other hand, was content to write "Pathetique" — even more than was needed — over his sixth symphony, and let it stand with that. His "Romeo and Juliet" overture fantasia is dependent upon itself alone for its artistic justification. The centre of æsthetic gravity is in the work.

Let us, however, give Mr. Strauss the benefit of his own utterances. In 1897, in speaking of "Also sprach Zarathustra" he said: "I did not intend to write philosophical music, nor to portray Nietzsche's great work musically. I meant to convey musically an idea of the development of the human race from its origin through the various phases of development (religious as well as scientific) up to Nietzsche's idea of the Uebermensch, the Beyond-Man of Goethe."

As a London critic remarked at the time,

"even this is a tall order." Of course Mr. Strauss's word must be accepted. But before the present writer lies an elaborate pamphlet of some forty pages by Frederick Roesch and Eberhard Koenig, entitled "Ein Heldenleben, Tondichtung für Grosses Orchester, von Richard Strauss." It reproduces sixty-eight themes from the tone poem and has a long and laborious explanation of the composer's purpose and meaning. There are similar programme notes for other works by this composer. Persons who admit the iniquity of such explanations stoutly maintain that Mr. Strauss does not approve of them. The one before us was published by F. E. C. Leuckart, of Leipsic. On the last page are advertised several compositions by Strauss published by the same person.

Furthermore, previous to the production of the "Symphonia Domestica" in New York last March, Mr. Strauss had steadfastly denied that there was any programme for the work. "It represents simply a day in my family life," he said. These statements were repeated in the official programme note of the concert, written by my colleague, H. E. Krehbiel, of the New York *Tribune*. The day after the concert the New York *Times* published a detailed programme of the symphony, furnished to the

writer, Richard Aldrich, by Dr. Strauss, and that programme was more elaborate and materialistic than any imagined by uninformed gropers after the composer's meaning.

Howsoever these things be, the ultimate question remains: Will the compositions of Mr. Strauss and his kind stand the test of Ambros? Is their æsthetic centre of gravity within themselves? That is a true test of all art works. The test of a Corot landscape is not its perfect portraiture of a place, but its complete and satisfying existence as a painting; and that, be it noted, is wholly a matter of artistic feeling in the work itself. The test of a poem is not its power to convey to the reader a mental photograph of the scene or action or thought which inspired the work, but to touch the reader's emotions, to stimulate his imagination by and through itself alone. Neither the observer of the landscape nor the reader of the poem is asked to look outside of the work itself for an explanation of its mood. The picture and the poem fully explain themselves. They lay before the mind both cause and effect.

This music cannot do. Long ago it was called the language of emotion, and the embodiment of feeling is its highest province. Even in the opera, with the assistance of text and

action, music should not strive to go further than this. Its office is to voice the emotions which lie behind action and speech, to raise to the tenth power those simpler and more limited inflections and tones of the voice which are used in the spoken drama. In the great instrumental song without words it is again moods and emotions that music must proclaim. Mr. Strauss may tell us that in "Also sprach Zarathustra" he did not attempt to do the things which makers of programme explanations accused him of doing, but merely to put before us, in music, the simple process of the religious and scientific development of the human race up to the conception of the Beyond-Man.

How easy it all is, to be sure, and how stupidly devoid of imagination we must all be who fail to read it clearly in the music! If we fail to find it, it is our fault. Lichtenberg, a witty German, said, "If a monkey look into a mirror, no Apostle will look out."

We may save ourselves much time and intellectual labor if we listen carefully to "Also sprach Zarathustra." Dr. Draper packed a history of the intellectual development of Europe into two substantial volumes which a thoughtful man may read in a winter; yet he may hear not only the intellectual, but also the religious

development of the entire human race in Mr. Strauss's tone poem in about thirty minutes. A benefactor of mankind indeed is this philanthropist, who has not sought to write philosophical music. He has invented for us a kind of sugar-coated knowledge tablet. Abolish dry books and listen to the tone poems of Richard Strauss, and you will have the wisdom of the ages poured into your ears by trumpets and trombones.

And yet how refreshing to the spirit it is to hear after a Strauss tone preachment some such work of pure feeling as Schumann's Spring symphony! Here is no fugued fuddle of the fulminations of science. Here is no heart-wrung cry of a philosopher from the mountain top, come down to set whole the disjointed times and wailing because the populace thinks him a goatherd. Here is no dissector of sated souls, no juggler with death rattles, no miser of a hope-drained race.

Here is one who served and suffered for the sake of love's infinite joy, who has trod the valley of the shadow and come to the sunlit plateau of his heart's desire, and who, as he lifts his brow to the radiance of the new day, strikes his lyre and bursts into a pæan of rapture. His music glows and throbs with feeling, for it is

feeling grown too great for the inflection of common speech and so hymned to us by the myriad-voiced orchestra in one beautiful anthem of the budding of eternal spring in the heart of a man. That is programme music which needs no explanatory notes.

> "Backward, turn backward, O Time, in thy flight!
> Make me a child again just for to-night."

How often shall we who are treading the downward slopes of life croon that old couplet and yearn for the cradle songs of Schubert and Beethoven? How often, too, we wonder, will a weary world turn back with weary brain from the sordid task of transfretating "the Sequane at the dilucul and crepuscul" with Strauss and his tribe to the poets of the dawn who smote the great primeval chords of human feeling? This we may not now answer, for orchestral music is yet in her infancy and it is possible that the period of to-day is but the disturbance of a transition.

IV. — STRAUSS AND THE SONG WRITERS

He hath songs, for man or woman, of all sizes.
A Winter's Tale, Act IV. Sc. 3.

IN the domain of the song new developments have come forward with startling rapidity in recent years. Every student of musical history is familiar with the growth of what is called the art song. The folk song was a simple form, in which a good, round tune, once made, served for every stanza. The early composers of songs were content to adhere to this form, which had its musical claim for supremacy, just as the Italian opera had.

But after a time the imperious demand of text for appropriate embodiment compelled a departure from the old manner. Mozart set a pretty fashion when he composed "Das Veilchen" and altered the germinal thematic idea, by a process similar to symphonic development, to meet the varying sentiment of the verse. But not much was accomplished till the birth of the so-called romantic movement. This was really nothing more than the victory of a principle, which had for centuries been striving for dominion, and it

led the world to enthusiastic adoration of the songs of Schubert and the operas of Weber.

Then began the reign of what the Germans call the "durchcomponirtes lied," literally the "through-composed song." This is the song in which the music faithfully follows the text and changes in melodic externals and in harmonic plan to express sentiment. Schubert's "Erl-König" is a perfect specimen of this kind of song. Of course the writing of songs in the old strophical form did not cease. Why should it? There were still plenty of texts which lent themselves readily to that kind of setting, and if popularity be sought, there is nothing like a fixed melodic idea.

Gradually, however, those composers who seek always to dwell in a rarefied atmosphere, who are nothing if not "utter," and who ceaselessly endeavor to make poor Music a mere handmaid of all the other arts, have driven the "durchcomponirtes lied" to the verge of incoherence. The musical idea has become almost intangible, and all that seems to be left is a vague dispensation of tonalities and recitativo. For some sanity in this method of writing we have to thank the arch speculator of Munich, Richard Strauss. Whatever may be the ultimate outcome of the dispute over his orchestral riddles, there need be no hesi-

tation in pronouncing him a master of the modern manner of song writing.

Mr. Strauss's songs belong of a surety to the domain of the ultra-romantic. There is little of the old-fashioned German lied in them. It might be possible to trace their descent from the folk-song of Germany, and occasionally one appears in the genuine "volksthümlisches lied"[1] style. But many generations of artistic development separate these songs from their progenitors. The strophic form has quite disappeared in most of them. They are in the widest sense composed through. The germinal thematic idea is but a root from which the song grows. It barely sets a style and a direction for the whole. But it must not be supposed that these songs are in any sense formless.

They have an individual symmetry of form. It is a variety of the form of the romantic school, which is built entirely upon the emotional plan underlying the music. The musical scheme, therefore, consists of a proposition which is worked out by a method of transition, so that new material springs from the original thematic germ, and we arrive at novel and striking con-

[1] The volksthümlisches lied is a variety of song written by artistic composers on a plan suggested by the folk song. It is the folk song placed under cultivation.

clusions. Of melodic shape in the old sense some of these songs have almost nothing. But they are none the less luxuriously melodious. Their melodic nature differs from that of a Schubert song as the melodic nature of a Wagner drama does from that of a Weber opera. This does not mean that they are better songs than Schubert's. There are no other songs as fine as those of the fecund Franz Peter. But music is making progress, and the methods of song writing will probably change as fast as those of operatic and orchestral composition. Art is ever disinclined to stand still.

The harmonic basis of the Strauss songs is the principal cause of their melodic luxuriance. Strauss harmonizes wholly for what the Germans call the "stimmung." We have no word which exactly reproduces the meaning of this one; but let us call it the voicing of the mood. Strauss's harmony is designed to make an atmosphere in which his melody floats. At the same time this atmosphere is to envelop the hearer and saturate him with the feeling of the song. The high organism of this plan of attack upon the listener stamps it as the refined product of modern, thoroughly sophisticated art.

It is very trying on the singer. Some of Dr. Strauss's voice-parts, planned, not as the ultimate

object in view, but wholly as a part of a general scheme, are cruelly difficult. In range alone they make searching demands upon the vocal resources. In the department of mental conception of tone — the highest field of vocal technic — they are as evasive as some of the tonal illusions of Wagner. But they are not unsingable. On the contrary, once let the singer thoroughly permeate himself with the harmonic atmosphere, and thus attune himself to the "stimmung" of the song, and his troubles reduce themselves to the common problems of production and coloring of tone, which have nothing more to do with the nature of Dr. Strauss's songs than with those of all other artistic composers.

It is essential to the success of songs of this kind that the declamation be arranged with much skill, otherwise that pregnant significance which is to come of a perfect marriage of sound and sense will be missing. In this department of his technical labor Dr. Strauss shows much ingenuity in most of his songs. Sometimes the text is dramatized in a manner quite masterly. In the entire range of song literature one would search far to find anything more subtle or potent than the opening of "Hoffen und wieder verzagen." This is a piece of dramatic declamation written in the modern recitative idiom and as

distant as possible from the pure lied style; but it is intensely dramatic.

Accompaniments this composer writes with skill. They are sufficiently independent without at any time dominating the song, while in their employment of details they assist greatly in creating the mood. The result of the combination of the best traits found in these songs is a striking power of exposition, a convincing formation of the "stimmung." When upon a well-established mood Strauss builds climaxes such as those of "Wie solten wir geheim sie halten," "Heimliche Aufforderung," and "Caecile," the effect is moving. When he desires to offer a touch of that humor which lies close to tears, he can do it, as witness that little masterpiece "Ach weh mir unglückhaftem Mann."

Yet with all the beauties of the Strauss songs there are some weaknesses that must not be denied. A cycle of these songs will not maintain its charm from beginning to end as will Schumann's "Dichterliebe," or "Schubert's 'Müllerlider." The earlier song masters, to be, sure, had the advantage of a more fertile soil. They had fresh fields and pastures new. And they belonged to a school of composers whose very first claim to distinction was their fecundity of melodic invention.

The Strauss songs are not primarily melodic. Neither are any of the high art songs of our time. All our song masters are marching steadily out into the vague and mystic land of moonlight moods and shifting shadows of tonalities. The strict song form irks them. They cease not to twist their phrases so that these may not coincide with the lines of the stanza. They are stung with the virus of the Wagnerian method. They make melody in fragments.

Now it is no easy matter to write one vague, semi-mystic, intangibly harmonized mood picture after another, eschewing clearly marked melodic and rhythmic outlines, and at the same time to avoid monotony. Dr. Strauss's songs, let us confess it, often seem monotonous when half a dozen of them are sung in a row. It requires a nice skill in selection to escape this. It can be escaped, for the composer has been prolific and he has written some good things in the pure lied style, which may be alternated with the others. But the presence of this element of monotony is worth considering, because it is a manifestation of a difficulty into which the present manner of song writing is leading composers. Perhaps all the good tunes have been written!

Melodic invention is a vital element in the

making of songs. There must be a thematic subject. No matter how far into the realm of detailed declamation the composer may elect to go, he may not wholly neglect the musical figure. If he does, he writes not song, but recitative. The fundamental difference between lyric declamation and pure recitative lies in the presence of the musical figure in the former, and the musical figure is the root of melody. It is the motive, the rhythmic and melodic germ.

If now we turn from the songs of Richard Strauss to those of the much-lauded Hugo Wolf, we shall find that there is a difference in this very matter. Wolf's melodic ideas are singularly vague and deficient in directness of character. They do not come clean out upon the ear as the proclamation of a master's embodiment of a poetic thought; neither do they set a character or fix a mood. They easily lose themselves in the speculative convolutions of that philosophic declamation which is the peculiar fruit of contemporaneous cultivation in the field of song. Intervallic difficulties abound in these Wolf songs, and the harmonic basis is so strained at times that the ear is outraged by the withholding of the normal resolutions of the chords.

But these things are part and parcel of the musical affectation of the time. Possibly twenty

years hence these wrestings of musical nature will have become sweetened by the uses of adversity, and the ears of the very children will accept them as freely as they now do the lush harmonies of "Träume" and "Im Treibhaus."

Wolf's artistic endeavor in song writing is clearly the same as that of Richard Strauss, but the achievement is far different. To throw songs by the two composers into close juxtaposition as is frequently done in recitals is to inflict a needlessly cruel punishment on Wolf. To interject into the programme one of the uncommon songs of Schubert, such as "Dem Unendlichen," is still more cruel, for this serves to show that the melodious Franz Peter could pen philosophic apostrophe and oratoric declamation with the best of the moderns, and yet remain more musical than any of them.

Strauss, be it said to his credit, never omits the proposition of some sort of a musical theme. But his method is not that of the elder lyric school. He is a romanticist of the ultra-modern type, and carves out his musical forms over the pattern of his text with infinite labor. He lays down a theme which sets a character and indicates a point of aim; and then he develops, as I have already noted, by the method of transition, so that new material springs from the old

in our very sight as the eastern conjurer's flowers grow from the bare earth.

Wolf works on similar lines. He is not a conscious imitator, but his method is the Strauss method, the method of Schubert's "Delphine" buried under the twentieth-century manner. But Wolf lacks both the directness of Schubert and the ingenuity of Strauss. His work in many places rings false. It smells too often of the midnight forge and the hammer of the driven quill. Schubert's song bursts from him full grown, like Minerva from the head of Jove. Strauss's songs show reflection and aspiration and loving care in their finish. Wolf's echo with the sound of the workshop. They are by no means journeyman work, but they are hewn out with hard labor and they do not give forth the fragrance of utter spontaneity.

Questions will naturally arise as to the power of these songs to stand comparison with the lyrics of the later Frenchmen. Reynaldo Hahn, for example, also toys with the rarefied method, and paints delicate impressionistic tone pictures. These are not ordinary songs, but they will not bear the chilling spaces of the concert room. They are for the salon, for the intimate communication of one at the piano to another sitting beside it.

With a cigarette, a glass of Madeira (very mellow), lights half down, as stage directions say, and a woman with whom you are not too much in love singing to you in the point-lace wilderness, the songs of Reynaldo Hahn will make of you an Omar Khayyam transformed into what Mr. Kipling calls "a demnition product." If the woman is beautiful, the Madeira soothing, and the cigarette mild, you will be ready to swear that Hahn is the Schubert of the Boulevards. But if some one sings Hahn to you as No. 4 on an afternoon programme in a rectangular recital hall, you will vote the dainty French writer the essence of puerility.

Another of these very precious gentlemen who has come into notice is Alexandre Georges. Did you ever chance to hear his "Chansons de Miarka," settings of texts of Jean Richepin's "Miarka, the Bear's Foundling"? They are worth a hearing. The poems — consider such titles as "Nuages," "La Poussière," "La Pluie," "La Parole" — are mood pictures and invite musical treatment. The composer has done well with them. He has done nothing new, to be sure, but he has made himself comfortable in the well-kept museum of the obvious. He has trotted in old-fashioned rhythm with the Romany, and he has rained a

glittering torrent of sixteenth notes along the upper steppes of the keyboard.

But what can we ask? A Frenchman must not be disrespectful of the vogue. These songs have atmosphere, and if it is painted in familiar and safe tints, who shall blame a man for assuring himself of correct methods? The declamation is generally clear and fluent, and the moods of the poems are reproduced in the music with propriety and elegance.

But this is wandering. The point to be made — not a very important one, perhaps — is that all these moderns, with Strauss, their best man, in the lead, are experimenting. They are testing the power of lyric composition to do without the poetic basis of metre. Without metre they are compelled to develop their melodies by a new process, and they seem likely to fall into the error of losing definite musical figuration altogether. They declaim and recite. Their accompaniments are miniature symphonic descriptions. Yet it has all been done before. The two Schubert songs already named, and "Die Allmacht" ought to show these gentlemen how to do what they seem to be trying so hard to do without quite accomplishing their ends.

AUX ITALIENS

I. — ITALIAN OPERA OF TO-DAY

What do ye singing? What is this ye sing?
SWINBURNE, *Atalanta in Calydon.*

SEVERAL factors have united in causing a new interest in the opera of Italy. In so far as New York is concerned the singing together of two such admirable exponents of the art of bel canto as Mme. Marcella Sembrich and Enrico Caruso has restored to life some of the older works, while a recent visit of Mascagni and the frequent performances of Puccini's "La Bohème" and "Tosca" have directed serious attention to the tendency of the younger art. The struggles of the youthful school to maintain its national characteristics in the face of its own yearnings after the flesh-pots of Wagnerism have afforded an absorbing spectacle for observers of musical progress.

The leader and master of all these young eagles was, of course, the incomparable Verdi, the most characteristic composer of opera Italy ever brought forth. But although he

showed them all precisely how to mingle the fruits of the new fields opened by Wagner with those of the old Italian soil, they have not always wisely accepted his instruction. They have sought for independence in manner, and in some instances with disheartening results. But perhaps a cursory review of some of their achievements may not be in vain.

Doubtless the casual observer will be struck first by the instrumentation of these modern Italians. Puccini's scores certainly offer abundant food for study, and his clever adjustment of the leading motive scheme to the instrumental background of a thoroughly Italian vocal melody, as in "Tosca," is an accomplishment not to be passed by with a smile. If we compare the scores of such works as those of Puccini and Mascagni with the works of the Donizetti period, we note with astonishment the immense strides made in the use of the orchestra.

But we must not be deceived. The Donizettian period was one of reaction. The Gluck-Piccini battle had not long since been fought out in Paris, and the principles of dramatic verity in opera had once more been vindicated, but at the cost of a great public weariness. The classic polish and repose of Gluck's music were

intellectually satisfying, but his scores lacked the vital heat to keep warm the blood of the artistically indolent. To this day the best works of Gluck invite our admiration, but seldom awaken our feelings. The idle, pleasure-seeking public of Europe soon turned again to its strumming ditties. It threw itself at the feet of Rossini, and within forty years after the establishment of Gluck's superiority in Paris the whole Continent was beating time to "Di tanti palpiti."

Once more the Voice was the deity of the operatic stage, and woe betide the composer who so wrote for his orchestra as to interfere with its supremacy. Rossini, who had artistic aspirations in spite of all his insincerity and intellectual laziness, made many improvements in operatic writing. It was he who first omitted from an opera all use of the old-fashioned dry recitative and used throughout that which has the support of the orchestra. He enriched the manner of writing for horns and clarinets, and he introduced instrumental effects which later composers have adopted with good effect. But, nevertheless, "William Tell" was a failure, and Rossini sulked in his tent for thirty years, while Bellini and Donizetti turned out their nursery operas, in which the orchestra has been likened to a "big guitar."

The advance in orchestral writing in opera after this time is often erroneously attributed wholly to Wagner, but undoubtedly it is the king of all musical charlatans, Meyerbeer, who should have the lion's share of the honor. When Wagner was a young, struggling, and utterly unknown composer, seeking for an opening in Paris, he threw himself at the feet of Meyerbeer, who was the idol of both the French and the Prussian capitals. Meyerbeer's operas were already known throughout Europe, and to their cheap and tawdry orchestral effects the later composers no doubt owed the suggestion that with the orchestra much might be said that could not be given to the voices. Subsequently the leaven of Wagnerism permeated European musical art, but the despised Meyerbeer undoubtedly pointed out to many writers the path which led back toward the true source of Italian operatic composition.

For in the beginning of opera, Monteverde experimented with orchestral effects, chiefly descriptive, to be sure, but indicating what might be done. Lully afterward developed some ideas as to dramatic expression in the instrumental score, and these were further expanded by Gluck. The progress along this path was checked temporarily by the reaction in favor of

cheap tunes for the display of voices. Verdi took up the development of the orchestral part of Italian opera where Rossini left off, and in his early works wrote in a style that bears more than a family resemblance to that of "William Tell." But Verdi was a man of broad vision, an assimilator of universal ideas, and he was not slow to recognize the drift of operatic art. He discerned the rising importance of the orchestral score and realized the full value of the instrumental adjunct. In "Aïda" he utilized to their utmost capacity its resources in coloring and in "Otello" he placed in the orchestra some of the most important and significant passages of his music,—passages which went further than anything in the setting of the text itself toward the complete explication of the emotions working in the drama. In "Falstaff" he used the orchestra as a commentator on the humor of every situation, and even succeeded in making it aid in the interpretation of Falstaff's ridiculous philosophy.

One has only to hearken for a minute to Mascagni's use of the basses in "Cavalleria Rusticana" to recognize the source of his knowledge. "Otello," with its wonderful bass recitative in the murder scene, was produced in 1887; "Cavalleria Rusticana" was brought out

in 1890. Mascagni's dramatic treatment of the orchestral part of the lyric drama is no mere imitation, however; it is a part of the general movement in Italian opera which began with Verdi's "Aïda" and which may without difficulty be traced back through Boito's "Mefistofele" (of which the first version was produced in 1868) to Rossini's "William Tell." The advance was akin to that made in all species of music. The first experiments were in the direction of description by means of imitative figuration. These are what we find in "Tell." The allotment to the orchestra of the emotional background of the drama was bound to come later, in the natural order of things. Mascagni stands in the direct line of progress in this matter, and his contribution to the general results is, though small, nevertheless worthy of remark.

How much he and Leoncavallo and Puccini owe to Ponchielli would be hard to determine. The composer of "La Giaconda" was somewhat ahead of his time, and his work was not fairly understood when it was new. But in one feature of operatic composition suggested by this work all the later composers seem inclined to go too far. They are striving to follow Verdi in his earnest attempt to set every phrase of the text of "Otello" to music perfectly adapted

to the expression of its meaning. But Verdi avoided the fatal error into which these young Italians are falling. He never went so far as to obliterate from his scores all trace of melodic character.

If one were to take a dozen or twenty pages of "Tosca," "Pagliacci," "Iris," and "Zanetto," shuffle them together and then play them, it would be almost impossible for any ordinary lover of music to distinguish the writing of one composer from that of another. "Zanetto" sounds as much like Puccini as like Mascagni, and the composer of "Iris" might have written almost any page of "La Bohème." This work, however, bears the same relation to Puccini's other works as "Cavalleria Rusticana" does to the other operas of Mascagni. It is well supplied with clearly formed melodies. That is the real reason of the wide popularity of "Cavalleria Rusticana." Rarely sinking below the level of passionate expression demanded by the intense tragedy of the story, it is always purely lyric, and its melodies stamp themselves upon the memory.

The other works for the most part seem to wander along in endless stretches of melodious phrases, which have no closely organized relation to each other. They sound well, for these

Italians have the trick of writing well for the singer. But they are open confessions of a fear of becoming tuneful in the old Italian style of Donizetti and Rossini. These young men seem to be constantly on the verge of writing in the aria form and of avoiding it only by thrusting in some unnatural modulation or some unexpected cadence. They seem to be striving for an endless melody, like Wagner's, which is not congenial to them. They forget that when the emotional conditions of the scene pointed to melodious music Wagner was frankly melodic, and that he wrote as lyrically as Schubert himself, though naturally constructing his melodies on a larger frame. Think of the joyous carol of the Rhine maidens in the water-woven vision of the first scene of the great trilogy; of the hard-wrung tribute of the crafty Loge to "Weibes Wonne und Werth"; of the love song of Siegmund, the duet between him and Sieglinde, the heart-rending farewell of the stricken god in the last scene; of Siegfried's Titanic cradle song to his infant sword; of the nightingale twitter of the forest bird, of the throbbing love duet of the third act of "Siegfried"; of the ebullient duet in the first scene of "Götterdämmerung"; of the chorus of Gunther's men, of the narrative of Siegfried, and of the stupendous threnody

of Brünnhilde's immolation. Wagner was not afraid to write songs when he needed them in his art.

It is a grave mistake to sell the Italian birthright of vocal melody for a mess of orchestral pottage. And it is altogether unnecessary. These young Italians must let alone their attempts to set reason to music. Their latest librettos contain too much philosophizing and not enough passion. Zanetto is altogether too sophisticated to be typical. Sylvia thinks too much. Osaka in "Iris" is altogether too much a man of the world. Iris is a human doll. Kyoto is an accomplished speculator in human folly. These are not figures to be animated with great music. They forbid its presence. These young Italians must get back to a realization of the fundamental truth that music is the speech of emotion. Love, hate, fear, elation, depression, grief, — these are for music to interpret. But you cannot discuss Christianity and positivism in lyrics, nor make intelligent comment in six-eight time on the causes of poverty. The limitations of music are far smaller even than those of lyric poetry, yet its field is as large as that of the true drama, for it is that of all human emotion.

Do they need a model? Well, there is one

of whom they seemingly know not. Away back in the years before even Rossini assailed flaccid Paris with the strenuous peal of "William Tell," a German boy of seventeen wrote in 1814 a song called "Gretchen am Spinnrade," and the following year he cast upon the waters that marvellous condensed drama "Der Erl-König." In the five minutes of that one song by Franz Peter Schubert lies the history of a human soul. It is an epitome of emotion, and the piano does quite as much as the voice — but not more — in the expression. If the young Italians would like to learn something more than they already know about the way to build condensed opera, let them study the songs of Schubert. There they will find a solution of the problem of how to combine perfect vocal melody with a dramatic accompaniment without sacrificing one iota of dramatic verity.

An additional question of high import is whether these young firebrands are not setting the torch to the roots of nationality in their art. It is useless for theoreticians to argue that there is no nationality in music. There is nationality in all art, and the "Virgin" painted by Rubens is a Flemish woman just as surely as she is Italian when limned by Michael Angelo. There never was a German who could have con-

ceived the lilt of "Funiculi, funicula," nor an Italian who could have composed "Schwesterlein." No Russian could have penned the dainty "Pierre et sa Mie," nor could a Frenchman have imagined "Ay Ouchnem." Only an Englishman could have written "Rule Britannia," of which Wagner said that the first four measures contained the whole character of the English people.

Nationality shows itself most conspicuously in song. Instrumental music is at best an artificial species. Its forms, its methods, are handed from one nation to another, and the Harvard graduate builds his symphony upon the Viennese model of Papa Haydn. But the musical idioms of a people cannot be kept out of their songs. The folk song was ignored successfully for a thousand years, but in certain happy days of the Middle Ages it wooed and won the fugue, and modern music, strong with the strength of musical science, beautiful with the beauty of spontaneous emotional utterance, was the fruit of this union. But for all time the idiom of the folk song colored the vocal art. The musical idioms imposed themselves on the scientific basis, and when a German or a Frenchman or an Italian composed a song, he composed it with a counterpoint common through all Europe, but

with the melodic idiom of the songs of his own people.

The Italians of to-day have not wholly forgotten the essentials of their native melody. Indeed, their composing betrays a deep self-consciousness. They see the character of their own music and try to escape it, and it is of this very act that complaint is here made. But the fundamentals of Italian melody are not entirely lost. The pages of Puccini's "Manon," "La Bohème," and "Tosca" are not completely devoid of song which is indisputably Italian. No one would ever mistake it for French or German. But it is no longer the melody of Donizetti and Bellini. That is well. The Italian masters of the beginning of this century wrote tunes for their own sake without thought of their dramatic expressiveness, and Donizetti did not hesitate to stop the entire action of his "Lucia" at one of the most critical points in order that the famous sextet might be sung.

The modern Italians do not fall into that sort of error. They are striving with all their power to compose dramatically. They are striving, too, to preserve Italian music, and for this all honor should be shown them. More than that, they have shown plainly the path along which Italian music should advance. They have dem-

onstrated beyond question that the aria, which was the central sun of the old Neapolitan system of opera, is wholly unessential. They have shown that the dialogue of the lyric drama can be carried on in a musical speech which is melodious, but not dominated by musical patterns. They have illustrated to the full the possibilities of a flexible and eloquent recitative. They have carried to a high degree of excellence the art of fitting the musical accent to the word, and the contour of the phrase to the natural inflection of the speech. This they have done, too, in the full knowledge that their art in this detail is quite lost upon the general public and appeals only to a few studious critics of their music.

They have abolished from the Italian stage the foolish repetitions of lines of the text as syllables on which to hang cadenzas. They have wiped out the empty colorature song, designed solely for the amazement of groundlings and for the glorification of the prima donna. They have almost terminated the career of the prima donna herself, and substituted for her, if not the singing actress of Wagner, at least an acting songstress. They have placed Italian opera beside French in its honest search after theatric directness. Italian opera is no

longer music and nothing else: it is what its early fathers intended it should be, *drama per musica*.

The movement of the young Italians toward dramatic verity, as already noted, did not originate in a weak surrender to the conquest of Europe by Wagner. The "Gioconda" of Ponchielli, produced in 1876, shows not a single trace of Wagnerian influence; and yet to that work as much as to any other are the young Italians indebted. They have travelled the path on which Ponchielli was moving, but they have gone much farther than he did. Ponchielli utilized the orchestral forces with high skill, and his dramatic recitative was far ahead of that found in Verdi's earlier works. For a second-rate master he attained extraordinary influence over his successors. Alas! that suggests that they are even less than second-rate, and it is quite possible that the near future will decide that they were less than third-rate. But we of the present must take them as they appear to us, and endeavor to learn from their works whither operatic music is tending.

Boito's "Mefistofele," which is as old as 1868, gave these young Italians much to think of, so much indeed that one can trace a good deal more than a family resemblance between the introduction of Mascagni's "Iris" and the pro-

logue in heaven in the Boito work. But the young men have striven again to make advances. That they have endeavored to introduce into their music an Italianized Wagnerism is the fault for which they must be most severely blamed, for in doing this they have wandered away from true nationalism and have betrayed their birthright.

It is not possible in a brief essay to point out the details of the methods of these young men. It may be said, however, that what they have apparently striven to do is to rear a distorted vocal structure, composed of the elements of the older Italian singing style, upon a foundation of acrid, restless, changeful, distressful harmonies. It may perhaps be injudicious to find fault with them for this, for no thoughtful observer of musical progress can fail to see that toward something new and strange in harmonic sequences all music is advancing. One needs only to think of the French operas of Bruneau and Charpentier, the piano music of the young Russians, the vast orchestral tone-riddles of Richard Strauss. If the use of strictly technical terms may be allowed, the harmony of to-day is no longer diatonic; it is not even chromatic; it is the harmony of the minor second. In other words, it is the harmony in which the

sharpest of all dissonances, that of two tones only a semitone apart, is prevalent. In the presence of this style of harmony the chord of the diminished seventh becomes as gentle as the tonic triad, for music is filled with what the eloquent and witty James Huneker once happily called "diseased chords of the twenty-sixth."

This style of harmony is not natural to Italian music. The genius of Italian song is utterly opposed to it. The proclivities of the Italian people are inimical to it. It is not adapted to the methods and traditions of the Italian lyric drama, and it has not been found necessary by the writers of the greatest masterpieces of Italian opera. Verdi and Boito were able to construct their notable works without it. Mascagni, on the other hand, has forced his music into this uncongenial way. His "Iris" teems with harsh and discordant harmonies, and in order to set the melodic voice-parts on this uneasy basis he has been compelled to twist the melodic curves of Italian song into unseemly angles.

Now these are facts. Just what they are to signify in the progress of musical art only a very confident person would venture to predict. Where is Italian opera? That question we may answer. Whither is it going? To that we can only hazard a reply. We may, too, be wholly

wrong in supposing that it is an evil day for art when Italian opera sacrifices anything of its intense nationality for the sake of rivalling the drastic music-drama of Richard Wagner. Critics are not prophets. They can only study the conditions of art in their own day, and try to reconcile them with those standards which the experience of time has shown to be the highest. As Mr. Webster once intimated, the only way to judge of the future is by the past. That method points to the conclusion that nothing good will come of the effort to dethrone the national genius. On the other hand, this effort looks amazingly like a confession of weakness.

It looks as if the young Italians were not of fruitful inventiveness in the production of thematic ideas. All the good tunes have not been written yet. John Stuart Mill confessed that for a time he was troubled with a fear that because there were only seven tones in the scale all the possible melodic ideas were nearly exhausted. But it has been noted that in spite of the immense drain made on the scale by Bach and Mozart and Weber and Beethoven and Schubert and Schumann there were still tunes enough to make a Dvorak, a Tschaïkowsky, a Brahms, and a Wagner.

II.—THE CLASSIC OF THE UNPROGRESSIVE

> But how may he find Arcady
> Who hath nor youth nor melody?
> H. C. BUNNER, *The Way to Arcady.*

IN these tumultuous times of Strauss and Wagner, with the furies of intellectual realism pursuing us and the sirens of seductive emotionalism panting before us, the persistence with which Donizetti's "Lucia di Lammermoor" clings to the lyric stage impels us toward the complacent conclusion that this work is become the classic of the musically unprogressive. This seems a hazardous statement, yet it may be shown without undue effort to enjoy a substantial and definite basis. The names of Racine and Molière, of Gluck and Lully, rise before the memory when the term "classic" is employed, but one should also not forget that there are thousands of well-intentioned persons to whom that is classic which is just far enough above the level of their ordinary thought to command respect. To the whistler of operetta jingles all music not to be whistled is classic. Stendahl said, in making a distinction too often made

arbitrarily: "Romanticism is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the actual state of their habits and beliefs, are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure; classicism, on the contrary, of presenting them with that which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their grandfathers."

If this demarcation of Stendahl's be correct, then "Lucia" is twice blessed in that it is both classic and romantic. For there is no doubt that it gave much pleasure to our grandfathers, nor is there any room for suspicion that it is not congenial to a "popular" audience in the actual state of its habits and beliefs. No doubt, indeed, there is a sort of gentle romanticism in "Lucia." The personages are of the class of lords and ladies, and there is something quite imposing in the strut of their boots and the waving of their feathers. One must even be impressed by the sight of the noble Scotch maiden wandering in the forest in a long-trained gown accompanied by a companion who wears low neck and short sleeves. We realize that we are in fashionable company, and we prepare for the worst. When Edgardo marches upon the scene just as Lucia has signed the futile contract, our expectations are realized, and we gaze upon the revelation of the secrets of high

life with an interest almost as direct and eloquent as that of the chorus itself. The madness of Lucy, accompanied by the winsome and ingenuous accents of the flute, touches us deeply, and when Edgardo, wandering among the tombs of his sainted fathers, learns that Lucy has ceased to live, and stabs himself, breathing out his life in that sweet melody (with chorus), "A te vengo," we are dissolved in tears.

This is romanticism in truth, and unless he be of those who preserve in middle age the intellectual grasp of childhood, one cannot find in this work any qualities of the classic beyond its familiarity to our grandfathers, except in the meaning of the dictum of Sainte-Beuve, "Les ouvrages anciens ne sont pas classiques parce qu'ils sont vieux, mais parce qu'ils sont energiques, frais, dispos." Now this last word is open to misconstruction. It may mean "cheerful" and it may mean "disposed" or "orderly." In the case of "Lucia" either meaning will answer, for it is the "energique" rather than the "dispos" that makes us trouble in the application of the definition of Sainte-Beuve. There are fuss and fury in the strenuous utterances of the tenor in the scene of the tearing of the contract, but these can hardly be called energy in the meaning in which the French author was

using the word. Youthful and cheerful, innocent and ingenuous, — these, indeed, are adjectives which may well be applied to the masterpiece of the composer of "Il Castello di Kenilworth" and other operas. For those who are living in the past of musical art "Lucia" is a classic, and it is also a living romance. It gave joy to their grandfathers, and it sends through their own nerves mild thrills, not discomforting, and not impeded by intellectual problems in tone.

When one comes beyond the "Lucia" period in operatic art, he may fairly enroll himself in the ranks of those whom Walter Pater calls "spiritual adventurers," — those who are ready to put out on unknown seas of art experience and who are notable for their active mistrust of the teachings of their grandfathers. Some of these are fools, but this fact only serves to remind one of a wise saying of that very wise man, Robert Louis Stevenson: "Shelley was a young fool, and so are these cock-sparrow revolutionaries. But it is better to be a fool than to be dead. It is better to emit a scream in the shape of a theory than to be entirely insensible to the jars and incongruities of life and take everything as it comes in a forlorn stupidity."

It is seldom that men take things as they

come in music in this "forlorn stupidity," for they set themselves stubbornly against the new. Yet the attitude of those who sit in amiable comfort at performances of "Lucia" and who go away saying, "Now that's the kind of music I like," with a tremendous accent on the "I," — an accent which is plainly the thank-offering of the Pharisee, — they are surely insensible to the jars, if not to the incongruities, of the modern musical world. And the spiritual adventurers will presently say to them: "We are at the parting of our ways. Linger you, if you will, in the valley with your Donizetti and his three-four ditties and his big guitar. We are for the mountain with Wagner and Tschaïkowsky and the thunder-storms."

But perchance it may occur to you to question whether they are not happier in their serene movelessness than those who are continually scaling heights. There is even some doubt about this, for they experience occasional twinges of discomfort when they hear of persons enjoying exclusive satisfaction in such works as "Falstaff" or "Otello" or "Die Meistersinger," which are to them poppy and mandragora. But there is something more pitiable than this in their sad state. That is their inability to enjoy the classics of the musically progressive.

The man or woman who is not subservient to a factitious taste in music, who has not habituated the intellectual palate to the enjoyment of Wagner alone, or of Rossini alone, — he it is whose soul is enriched by a wider range of impressions. For him no flower of music blooms in vain. For him there is some very special loveliness in the operas written before the flood-gates of modern romanticism were opened. For him there is still edification in the stately measures of Gluck's "Orfeo," and there is a fountain of inexhaustible pleasure in the immortal "Don Giovanni" of Mozart. To him the latter, in particular, is a perennial "Fons Bandusiae, splendidior vitro." Ability to penetrate to the heart of these works is an evidence of musical aristocracy. They are not for the common herd. The children of melodic and harmonic darkness are not enlightened by them. They shine for the few, the chosen few, who march with Music herself as their leader. To hear "Lucia" after one of these is like drinking iced water after eating ice-cream. The Donizettian masterpiece becomes suddenly lukewarm.

It has been said that in art there is no such thing as standing still. But the appreciation of art is surely a different matter. Music, the youngest of the arts, is in the very press of her

first forward march. She is in the possession of the priceless gift of unwearied strength. Her technical resources have not as yet been fully explored. She has mines of mere matter which have not yet been opened up. Her future is big with promise. But whatever that future may be, it will be the direct product of her past. She will never be able to cut the chains that bind her to Bach any more than poetry can break the bonds which tie her to David, the son of Jesse. Some of us are prone to forget this, and to think that we are of the army of progress when we neglect Bach and Beethoven and the prophets for the preachers of our own era. But there would have been no Brahms without a Haydn, and there would have been no Wagner without a Mozart.

It requires an æsthetic immobility unfortunately none too rare to stand still and enjoy "Lucia di Lammermoor" and "La Sonnambula" in a period when the whole spirit and outward form of musical art are tending directly away from them. The fact that so many persons can do it is but an evidence of what we know to our regret; namely, that most men and women refuse to take these things seriously. They hold that the opera is only a form of amusement and that it is absurd to fall into disputes about

it. Art is a pretty word to them; but if its meaning includes a command that they are to regard their "amusements" with grave eyes and to exercise the faculties of their minds upon them, away with it to the realms of outer darkness!

This is not an attitude which history encourages. Men have always been stern in the defence of their playthings, and they have always taken their pleasures very seriously. The whole Trojan war was about a man's passing fancy for a woman. More bitter wars than that have been waged for the sake of acquiring wealth and power, and to what end? That the possessors might buy playthings therewith. Grown-up children have their toys, but they wear graver aspects than the dolls and Noah's Arks of childhood. Sometimes the dolls become soldiers and the arks battleships in the nursery of a German Emperor. And so the world suddenly realizes that the pursuit of amusements is a large game, while his Majesty, perchance, practises a little music now and then, that some day he may fiddle while Rome burns.

Some of us are content to remain awake to the fact that, as Taine says, "At bottom there is nothing truly sweet and beautiful in life but our dreams," and to feel that this lovely art of

music is a chief among these dreams. Those of us who are of this mind naturally enough plume ourselves on our relationship to the kings who have made wars for playthings. But we have a secret satisfaction in the assurance that when the kings are forgotten and the boundaries of their kingdoms blotted from the maps of the world, the art of music will still be in the possession of the hearts of men. And then we wonder if the musically unprogressive will still be clinging to their jingling classic, "Lucia di Lammermoor"?

It is not a question to be answered lightly, for in these days the number of the lovers of "Lucia" is not to be estimated by the size of the audiences in the great opera-houses. There the fashion of the hour rules, and the mellow thunders of Wagner are enjoyed even with the lights turned down and the gowns in the gloom of a very precious manifestation of musical progress. It is in the unfashionable theatres that we must look for the evidences of the continued popularity of the masterpiece of the incontinent Donizetti. For the audiences of these houses are distinguished by a noble independence of thought. They like what they like, and they do not care who disapproves of it. And they adore "Lucia" even unto this day. But they do not love Mozart on the one hand, nor Wagner and

the senescent Verdi on the other. And for that reason they are at a standstill. They are the inglorious army of the musically unprogressive.

Out of this conclusion may come an inference as false as it is unattractive. If the lovers of "Lucia" are unprogressive, is, then, a great singer who still sings this part their leader? One may be tempted for a moment to utilize an apt jest and say with one of Mr. Gilbert's most delightful personages, "Bless you, it all depends." If the great artist is great only by reason of the manner in which she sings Lucia, then she is a star of the unprogressive. But if she chance to be Marcella Sembrich and to sing Mozart as beautifully as she sings Donizetti and with the added understanding which is essential to the interpretation of the classic of the progressive, then she is a leader of progress, although she still finds a field for the exercise of her talents in the world of the complacent.

And if the artist be a tenor and be called Caruso, then he may sing Edgardo and die of an aromatic melody in the moonlight amid general blessings.

THE ORATORIO OF TO-DAY

Praise the Lord with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. Sing unto Him a new song: play skilfully with a loud noise.

Psalms xxxiii. 2, 3.

ENGLAND, where, as Mr. Gilbert was good enough to tell us in "Iolanthe," every child is born either a Liberal or a Conservative, leans both ways within the comfortable domain of oratorio. Chorus answers unto chorus and fugues pursue the even tenor (or bass, as the case may be) of their way, as they did in the brave days of old, when the Saxon sputtered in the Haymarket and threatened to pitch recalcitrant prima donnas out of windows. The festival of the three choirs preserves for the edification of a prosaic and stiffnecked generation the majestic sonorities of Handel and the subtle intimacies of the introspective Bach.

The prancing of Elgar into this peaceful world with his pocket full of leading motives, with a dramatization of the very throne of the Invisible, and a suggestion of the Mary Magdalen of Wagner, neither astonishes nor stirs the critics. The

harsh yell of the shofar disturbs them no more than the profound rumble of the contrabassoon. And since Mendelssohn left his "Elijah" ceaselessly clamoring for the costumes, the action, and the footlights of the stage, no Englishman is to be set staring by the projection of a sacred drama upon his field of vision.

After all, it was only in the day of Handel that the Bishop of London decided for us that oratorios should no more be acted. How do we know that, if things continue to go forward along the present lines, we shall not have a later bishop determining that the oratorio ought to be acted and thereby excluded from the hallowed precincts of famous cathedral towns? Then the censorious throng which has looked askance upon the New World performances of "Parsifal" would find that panorama of a young pilgrim's progress as innocuous as one of the "Four Serious Songs" of Brahms.

To those who watch with some solicitude the march of musical progress, it looks as if we were in the midst of a transition in the world of oratorio. A very peaceful transition, indeed, it is; for we are no longer to be excited by a comparison of Handel with other masters. We care not a pinch of snuff whether Coleridge-Taylor be a genius or not. We go once a year to hear "The

Messiah," and occasionally we remember with a sort of mild surprise that Handel also wrote "Israel in Egypt." When Mr. Elgar comes along with his revolutionary notions, compounded of Carissimi, Handel, Mendelssohn, and Wagner, we view them with a placidity which would be amusing were it not so stupid. The times have changed, indeed, since Gray wrote to Swift, on Feb. 23, 1723: —

"As for the reigning amusement of the town, it is entirely music; real fiddles, bass viols and hautboys; not poetical harps, lyres and reeds. There's nobody allowed to say 'I sing' but an eunuch or an Italian woman. Everybody is grown now as great a judge of music as they were in your time of poetry, and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another now daily dispute about the different styles of Handel, Bononcini and Attilio. People have forgot Homer and Virgil and Cæsar; or at least, they have lost their ranks. For in London and Westminster, in all polite conversations, Senesino is daily voted to be the greatest man that ever lived."

True, this pother was all anent opera, which even to this day evokes a considerable gush of invalid comment about glorified tenors and sopranos. At least the men of the opera to-day are actually masculine, but there is an echo of the Handelian period in the adoration of tenors.

But that, as the pleasant Mr. Kipling was wont to say in his pleasantest tales, is another story. It was but a flight of years till London town cackled as busily about Handel's oratorios as it had about his operas. A private letter from London, printed in Faulkner's Journal (Dublin) of March 12, 1743, said: —

"Our friend, Mr. Handel, is very well, and things have taken quite a different turn here from what they did some time past; for the publick will no longer be imposed on by Italian singers and wrong-headed undertakers of bad operas, but find out the merit of Mr. Handel's compositions and English performances. The new oratorio (called Samson) which he composed since he left Ireland, has been performed four times to more crowded audiences than ever were seen; more people being turned away for want of room each night than hath been at the Italian opera."

Nevertheless, even in those days there was little enough distinction between the styles of the opera and the oratorio, and not many years before Handel's day there had been none at all. Both opera and oratorio sprang from the same soil and were nurtured by the same fount, the drama of Greece. Cavaliere's "Anima e Corpo" was a delectable theatrical performance, prepared under the direction of a very good man, St. Philip Neri, with the laudable aim of drawing

young persons away from the vulgar secular shows of Rome in the dawn of the seventeenth century. Like "Die Zauberflöte" this oratorio ended with a chorus, "to be sung, accompanied sedately and reverentially by the dance." How deep was the reverence and how reposeful the sedateness may be gathered from the fact that the ballet was "enlivened with capers or *entrechats*."

A religious drama it was, this early oratorio, and it battled its way into popularity by the mighty power of music. Its arch-enemy was the old mystery and miracle play, which made of every religious story something more lively than even an oratorio with a ballet enriched with capers. To combat the attractiveness of the popular religious play the oratorio had to cling to the stage, the costume, and the footlights, and it would have been little stranger to read in the time of Carissimi (1582–1672) than it was, in the century before his birth, the famous Coventry bill of expenses, which contains these items.

Paid for a pair of gloves for God	2d.
Paid for four pairs of angels' wings	2s. 8d.
Paid for mending of hell head	6d.
Paid for a pound of hemp to mend the angels' heads	4d.

But Carissimi, and still more directly after him Stradella, advanced the oratorio toward a style in which acting was to become incongruous. Stra-

della had the Handelian feeling for mass effects. He perceived the true use of the great chorus, and he piled up majestic climaxes with a skill marvellous for his time. He died four years before Handel was born, but he had already carved out that definiteness of structure which is so salient a feature of Handel's works. The drift away from the dramatic character had already begun. Indeed, Dr. Parry in his admirable "Evolution of the Art of Music" expresses doubt that even the works of Carissimi can have been intended for action. Still, we must not forget that whether oratorio should or should not be acted remained an unsettled question till the decision of the good Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, in Handel's day.

However, a comprehensive view of the works of Handel and Bach shows that the oratorio had in their time been clearly differentiated in style and purpose from the opera. Bach's employment of the tenor narrator places his Passions on a ground far removed from the pictorial presentation of the stage. We know, too, that Bach wrote for church performance. Handel's oratorios designed for the concert platform were quite as far away as Bach's from the manner of the theatre, though they departed in a different direction.

Dear old Papa Haydn, who wept with emotion when he heard the Hallelujah chorus and exclaimed, "He is the master of us all," was even less dramatic than either Handel or Bach, for although they used no dramatic forms, they had their mighty outbursts of emotional expression; while their declamation, as well as their massive climaxes, often rises far above the trumpery effects of the opera of their period.

But Haydn was a most gentle spirit. He was too full of the fluid of humility and too much given to amiable reflection to approach dramatic effects. His music in both the "Creation" and "The Seasons" is descriptive, commentary, and speculative. It is delightful and it is exceedingly mild. It dwells comfortably in a peaceful atmosphere very remote from that of the nervous theatricalism of Carissimi or the impulsive eloquence of Stradella. It is just as far, too, from the poignant intensity of the psychic personification found in Bach's music. Bach's Christ is the living Son of God, but always in the heavens. It is a Christ of the inmost soul, not of the imaginative eye. It is a Christ of the heart, and has no pictorial form.

But Haydn sets a world before us, and lets us hear the rushing of the waters and the sighing of the winds. It was reserved for a thor-

oughly cultivated master to unify in his work the elements found in all these predecessors. Mendelssohn, without letting go of the Protestant chorale, which was so potent in the Bach Passion, or the massed chorus which Handel learned from Stradella how to use, or the orchestral description of Haydn, or the flexible recitative of Carissimi, succeeded in producing a new form of purely dramatic oratorio. His "Elijah" flashed forth as a religious opera. It might be put on the stage and acted. It stands almost perfectly adapted to such use, and would certainly prove far more influential in the theatre than "Anima e Corpo" did even in its own day. Mendelssohn was not a mighty genius, but he was a most clever adapter.

Since his day oratorio has wavered between the Italian dramatic form of the earliest period and a modernization of the Bach form. English composers have over and over again written for their festivals on the lines of Handel or Mendelssohn, seemingly without a clear discernment of the inner characteristics which differentiated the two. Continental composers have made all sorts of experiments. Gounod even tried in his "Redemption" to show how the melodic style of "Faust" could be superimposed on the ground plan of Bach. It is need-

less to say that the scheme met with a cheering failure. Oil and water would not mix.

Edgar Tinel, whose "St. Franciscus" was produced in Brussels in 1888, was the first to make a deliberate attempt to return to the earliest dramatic form of the Italians. He certainly did not contemplate a stage performance, but he wrote in the fashion of the lyric drama of his time. He used the whole apparatus of the German opera except the leading motive. But Tinel failed in one important particular. He was unable to use the means of the opera without making it produce the speech of the theatre. His oratorio smells of the stage. It is a religious drama only because its story is in a measure religious. The music and much of the thought are, to say the least, secular. It may not be going too far to say that sometimes they are profane.

Now, what has Edward Elgar accomplished, and what does the character of his work indicate as the present tendency of oratorio? In his musical method he has striven to demonstrate that Bach and Wagner were of one blood. And, indeed, who that has heard the twining polyphony of five themes near the end of the "Meistersinger" prelude ever doubted that both of these masters sprang from the loins of Pales-

trina, the son of the house of Ockeghem? Elgar has preserved for the necessity of oratorio the narrator, though he has diversified his recitation by dividing it among the voices.

This preservation of the narrator is the one characteristic of the contemporaneous oratorio form which proclaims to the world that the mandate of the Bishop of London is still in force. Nothing else in the score would disclose this fact. Everything is constructed on dramatic lines; everything is conceived in the mood of Mendelssohn's "Elijah." The tremendous picture of the entrance of the soul of Gerontius into the shrine of the Invisible and the descriptive speech of Mary Magdalen on her tower, accompanied by the sounds of the orgy, demand most eloquently the accompaniment of pictorial scenes. And these are but two examples taken at random from scores prolific in similar instances.

The distribution of the narrative among several voices is the method of Handel, but in the treatment of the choruses Elgar has learned still more from that master. Here we have lessons accepted from both Bach and the Saxon, and in the dawn of the twentieth century we find a product of the skill of Stradella in handling huge masses of tone.

In the employment of one set of choruses representative of actors in the story and another of purely commentary nature, Elgar has followed Bach's method in "The Passion." He has honored aged custom in allotting the words of Jesus to a bass voice. The treatment of the post-ascension speeches of the Saviour as choral, or many-voiced, is as old as Heinrich Schütz.

Furthermore, Mr. Elgar has preserved the ecclesiastic character in his music by adhering to the use of the polyphonic devices which were created by church composers and which have sternly resisted the efforts of the ablest masters, even of Verdi, to lend themselves to the restless utterance of the music drama. Elgar's polyphony is by no means stencilled in form; his fugues are not fugues of the North German pattern. He handles single and double counterpoint with consummate ease and with the assured freedom of one who dares to depart from the beaten path without fear of disaster.

Added to this is the employment of a harmonic style which belongs entirely to the present day. Mr. Elgar's polyphony is built on a harmonic basis which almost completely ignores the ecclesiastic tonalities of the earlier church writers and utilizes the diatonic and chromatic

scheme of the present, the method of Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde." It is as far from Handel as it is from Mendelssohn. Its source is without question the inexhaustible fount of musical learning, the music of Sebastian Bach, but it is Bach studied by the lamp of Brahms and recited with the tongue of Wagner.

Brahms was himself a filter of Bach, and this might seem to indicate that the Sebastianism of Elgar was exceeding thin. But the English writer, while considering the work of the composer of the "German Requiem," has accepted suggestions from it only as to manner. For the original matter he has gone back to the real master of all masters. In his recitatives he again has shown a profound understanding of the psychologic nature of Bach's declamation. Upon it, as a foundation, he has reared a style of his own, very flexible, full of variety and as changeful in its harmonic undercurrents as a sunset sky.

To these derivations from the art of Bach and others Elgar has added much of the material of to-day's music. In the first place, he has permitted the diatonic major mode to occupy its own proud place as the chief medium for the expression of the optimistic emotions. Bach seldom tarried long in major keys. He was

lingering under the influence of the ecclesiastic modes. Elgar has emancipated his oratorio music from the domination of these modes, but he has not, like Handel and Mendelssohn — the one governed by the Omphalic distaff of Italian opera and the other writing in an age when the minor was always relative — neglected their significance entirely.

Secondly, he has utilized the whole splendor of the modern orchestra and has extended it in every direction which seemed to him necessary. He has employed gongs, both great and small; cymbals ancient and modern, bells with and without keyboard mechanism, tambourine and triangle. Of course, he has written elaborately for the organ; he would not be a loyal son of the royal house of Bach if he had not.

Thirdly, he has gone over, horse, foot, and baggage, to the Wagnerian camp and armed himself from head to foot with leading motives. In "The Apostles" there are ninety-two of them — just two more than Hans von Wolzogen found in the whole of "Der Ring des Nibelungen." The result is that there is almost no free composition in the score; it is all woven out of the motives. The web thus woven is sometimes thick, sometimes thin. Motives steal upon us singly or crowd before us four at a time,

writhing in a counterpoint, sometimes forming most beautiful orchestral cloud shapes and again smearing garish shades and monstrous outlines across the musical firmament. Elgar never shrinks from outlandish combinations. He is as daring as Strauss. He makes fearful ugliness when he wishes to do so. But he does everything with a delineative purpose. He is the Wagnerite of oratorio.

To Wagner's ingenious scheme of interweaving and developing leading motives Elgar has joined the ground plan of polyphonic choral writing which was the secret of the influence of Bach and Handel, but Elgar has a palette with a thousand tone tints which they never knew. He has all the delicate inner tracery of modern harmonization to throw additional lights and shades upon his colors.

In a word, Elgar has brought together in his oratorios all the expressional power of modern musical romanticism, whether found in the descriptive tone pictures of the instrumentalists, the declamation of the dramatists, or the orchestration of the contemporaneous opera. What is the result? We have now oratorio quite as dramatic as Tinel's, but saved from mere theatricalism by the artistic discretion of the composer.

But the thing itself is anomalous. As we have noted, the narrator becomes an imperative necessity, because oratorio now demands scenic representation, and that is forbidden. How much more imposing would "The Apostles" be if we would frankly go back to the way of Cavaliere and put it on the stage! Why enact "Parsifal" and not this? Which is the truer tale, the more convincing art? This "Apostles" reads like that question-begging version of "Parsifal" as a narrative poem in which all the stage directions are turned into descriptive verse. Set those descriptions to music and have them recited by singers in evening dress and you have your "Parsifal" in correct oratorio form.

Are we afraid of it? Or is it simply that certain good people to whom the theatre is a place accursed must have their dramatic excitements in some other form? Let us, if you will, go to a dimly lighted concert hall and sit with our heads bent over our scores while ladies and gentlemen, gloved and in evening dress, narrate and chant to us a tremendous drama, helped out by all the resources of modern delineative music, and we try to see the action with our mind's eye. Thus shall we salve our consciences and perform the tragedy of the Passion

within the four walls of our skulls. This may perchance insure to us that salvation which might be endangered were we fearlessly to countenance an actual presentation of the drama on the stage.

The oratorio of to-day tends steadily toward the completion of a cycle. It started from the primitive religious play of Cavaliere, and through the development of the method of choral composition reached a point at which all conception of action disappeared. From that point it has been slowly and surely moving around to the restoration of the dramatic element, till now it stands once more at the very threshold of the theatre. In its present form it is an absurdity. Even the singers find it almost impossible to sing the oratorios of the new sort without putting at least facial expression into their work, and every one of them looks solemnly conscious of the foolishness of evening dress. Mr. Elgar's interpretation makes Judas Iscariot altogether too realistic for a white waistcoat, and his Mary Magdalen in a Princess gown with kid-gloved arms is a portrait which would make Henner gasp and Ruskin stare.

NOTE

The chapters of this volume, except three, appeared originally as articles in the NEW YORK SUN in the course of the two years during which I have had the honor to serve that paper. The first half of the chapter on "Strauss and the Song Writers" and the chapter entitled "The Classic of the Unprogressive" were first printed in the NEW YORK TIMES, of which it was my privilege to be musical editor for some years. The first of the four articles on Richard Strauss was previously published in the ATLANTIC MONTHLY. My thanks are due to the proprietors and editors of the journals named for permission to incorporate the essays in this book.

W. J. H.

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